



JUST HORSES

by

SEWELL FORD

ornia
nal
y



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

1st Edition

27.0

(m)

A. B. Brown

1844

JUST HORSES

BY SEWELL FORD

HONK, HONK!!

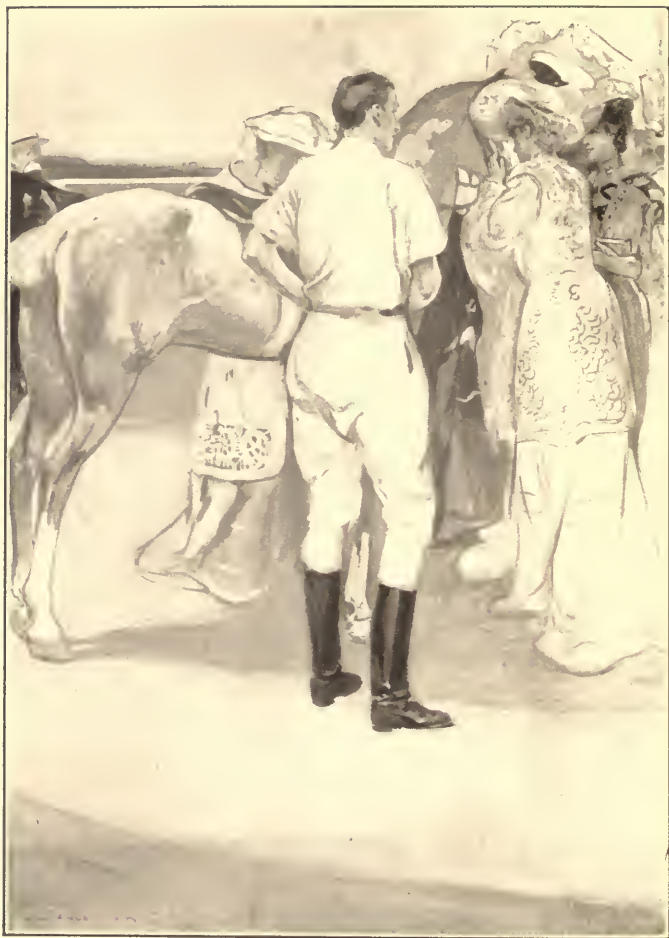
CHERUB DEVINE

SHORTY McCABE

SIDE-STEPPING WITH SHORTY

HORSES NINE

TRUEGATE OF MOGADOR



"ISN'T HE A DEAR?"

JUST HORSES

by

SEWELL FORD

Illustrated



MITCHELL KENNERLEY
NEW YORK MCMX

*Copyright 1910 by
Mitchell Kennerley*

PS
2511
F-1501

JUST HORSES

Jerry	11
Keno: A Cayuse Known to Fame	39
The Life of the Crowded Way	73
The Story of Pericles of Spread Eagle Battery	97
Fiddler	125
The Straying of Lucifer	155
Deacon: And How He Took Out the Christmas Mail	183

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Isn't he a dear?"	Frontispiece
"I'll smash the face av ye"	6
The man played like a fiend	54
Deacon refused to budge	196

JERRY

JERRY

BORN to the tight trace and bred for the long haul was Jerry. So there was no nonsense about him. From square, honest muzzle to solid rump he was soundly built, fashioned for work and for nothing else.

Yet, when he was first hooked into Mr. P. Dolan's new single truck, a vehicle as substantially built as Jerry himself, the turnout was one in which pride might be taken. Mr. P. Dolan, although little given to vain thoughts, certainly viewed it with satisfaction. As for the truck, it was the best that money could buy. Mr. P. Dolan had seen it at the factory before the paint and varnish had gone on. He

JUST HORSES

knew that neither in spoke or felloe, hub or axle, shaft or whiffle-tree, was there knot or flaw. And now, shining in red and gold, with never a scratch or dent to be seen, with his name and license number boldly lettered on the sideboards, the truck stood for two-thirds of his entire capital.

Representing the other third was Jerry. No discredit to the new truck was Jerry. Did every angle and surface of the truck give back the sunshine; well, look at the polished surface of Jerry's rounded quarters, look at his shining hoofs, note the brightness of his big, wide-set eyes. Mr. P. Dolan decided that chestnut red with black points was the ideal color combination for a truck horse.

"Looks like him an' the truck wor made fer aich other," he said.

"Sure, ye'll not be after haulin' dirty boxes and bar'ls in that purthy wagon, will

JERRY

ye, Pat?" asked the boarding stable boss.

"I'll load nawthin' but ostrich feathers an' plush-covered par-r-rlor sets the day," said Pat.

Of course Pat forgot all about this pleasantry when once he reached the downtown cigar store where hung his order slate. It was mighty fine, to be sure, this driving a branfire new outfit, but Pat did not lose sight of the fact that all this magnificence had cost the savings of four long, work-filled years, three as a hired driver, and one as the boss of a hired cart and horse. Now he was not only his own master, but he was full proprietor of his outfit. He figured that Monday's receipts should pay for Jerry's stable board, leaving the rest of the week clear for profit making. You can imagine that Mr. P. Dolan refused no commissions. "General Trucking" was the legend painted on his order slate, and

JUST HORSES

that meant handling any kind of load, from ill-smelling barrels of ice-packed fish on the Fall River pier, to cases of artificial flowers picked up from the sweat shop factories along South Fifth Avenue.

You may imagine, too, that Pat hooked up early in the morning, and that he unhooked only when the last load had been delivered. A full slate was what he wanted. He fretted only when he was compelled to sit idly on the truck-tail waiting for work.

Of idleness, however, there was no great amount. The new outfit seemed to bring orders. Shipping clerks looked with partial eye on the spick and span rig of Mr. P. Dolan. Often they watched approvingly as Jerry, his chestnut coat glistening from the morning rub down, the great muscles knotting and flexing on his solid, shaggy fetlocked legs, came pounding

JERRY

noisily up the street and backed with ponderous accuracy to the curb.

It was a fine sight, too, when some four tons of assorted merchandise had been piled on the truck, to see Jerry dig in his toe calks, throw his sixteen hundred pounds into the collar and swing the truck down the street with a high head-toss, as much as to say, "Pooh! This is nothing for me, nothing at all."

Even at the end of a hard day, during which Pat and Jerry had moved perhaps a dozen tons of local freight to different parts of the city, the big chestnut would finish in as good shape, apparently, as he had started; while Mr. P. Dolan, in the fresh vigor of his early thirties, broad of back and deep of chest, needed only some trifling refreshment—say two or three pounds of corned beef and potatoes and a pitcher of beer—to feel like beginning it

JUST HORSES

all over again. After supper Pat would fill his pipe, put his heels on the kitchen table and recount to Bridget and the children the number of loads, the weight of them and the estimated profits of the day's business. Before ten o'clock he would be asleep; dreaming, perhaps, of a long procession of single and double trucks, each bearing the name, in big gold letters, of P. Dolan.

Dreams of neither past nor future had Jerry. He lived each day as it came, exulting and glorying, after the manner of his kind, in the magnificent strength that lay in his pliant muscles. You should have seen him, when the truck was light, rattling down through the tangled swirl of Broadway traffic, arching his neck, switching his long black tail, and taking fancy steps that were prompted by the pure joy of living. Pat, standing on the truck

JERRY

floor, with his feet planted wide, his thumbs together and pointing up—which is the way your true truckman drives, you know—had his hands full in keeping Jerry from ramming the shafts through the windows of cabs and street cars. A load made but little difference. Jerry took fewer fancy steps then, but he always seemed to have a reserve fund of energy. Never, in those days, did he come in fully blown; never did he stand, as you may sometimes see horses standing, with heads lowered and flanks heaving like hard pumped bellows.

Pat's pride in his big horse took tangible form. To the practiced eye it was revealed in the number of utterly superfluous bone rings decorating the harness, in the fox-tail dangling from the martingale, and in the gorgeous red leather rosettes on the bridle. One might see it in the ribbons

JUST HORSES

braided into the plaits of Jerry's heavy black mane and forelock. Pat wore a canvas apron and tied burlap bagging around his shoes in winter, but for Jerry he bought the best wool blankets and thick chest pads.

It was not until the year of Pat's branching out in business that there came a change. Just in the middle of a boom season he contracted to do all the trucking for a big firm down in the wholesale dry goods district. Now packing cases, such as cotton goods are shipped in, are tremendously weighty for their size. You can pile five tons on a truck and not half try. It was really double team work that Jerry did that year.

"Ought to have another horse for that load, Dolan," they often told Pat.

"Oh, Jerry's good for it, eh, boy?" Pat would say, slapping the big chestnut's sleek rump. [18]

JERRY

And Jerry was. But no longer did Pat seem to have time for those little attentions which Jerry liked so much. There were fewer friendly exchanges of confidences between them. The morning grooming was brief and less thorough. There was no lack of oats, though. Jerry had his twelve quarts regularly, and sometimes it was even more.

“You git it all back in work,” explained Pat.

For Mr. P. Dolan had fixed his eyes on wealth. No more did he merely dream of that long procession of single and double trucks. The picture was in his mind all day and every day. He had a new contract. He had put on another truck, nothing fancy this time. Although the work was more than doubled, Jerry and one other horse did it all.

“Next year,” promised Pat, “we’ll go out double.” [19]

JUST HORSES

Then came that which the city folks were pleased to call a blizzard. Actually it was nothing but a big snowfall. Over the city it spread, a good three feet of it. The street cleaning department, being woefully inefficient and wholly corrupt as to management, merely nibbled at the mass of it and waited hopefully for rain. The paving in the middle of the main arteries was bared, but the tributary streets were left hub deep with the discolored slush that had once been snow.

It was just in the holiday season, too, when the wharves were heaped with inbound merchandise and the store rooms of the wholesale houses were choked with bales and boxes bound out on rush orders. Shipping clerks pleaded and threatened, railroad men fumed and levied storage charges, steamboat officials clamored, drivers promised and protested, and everyone

JERRY

swore between times at everyone else.

Through it all Jerry did his noble best. With but half loads on the truck he tugged heroically to drag the wheels through the miry streets, he slipped and slid and skated about on his balled hoofs, he fought his way through street jams, he strained every nerve and muscle from five in the morning until late at night.

A whole week of this he had been through when one day the thaw set in. The winter sun climbed as high as it could and shone dazzlingly on the snow-clogged city. The mealy mire softened to a mush-like consistency. It clung to wheel rims like so much glue. Pat was tons behind hand with his deliveries. The shipping clerks were frantic. Why couldn't he deliver their stuff? What was the matter with him and with his old plugs?

Seldom before had Pat used a whip on

JUST HORSES

Jerry. The big chestnut had needed no such spur. But that day Pat swung the lash hard and often. Stung more by the injustice of the cuts than by the pain, Jerry jumped vainly in the traces until his splendid muscles stood out like knotted cables. Still Pat urged him on, yanked his head viciously this way and that, until the great chestnut, that had never known exhaustion, was almost ready to drop between the shafts.

It was long after nine o'clock that night before Jerry got his supper and was bedded down, but before daylight next morning he was hooked in again. He was in bad shape, too, for beginning such another day. One hind leg was so badly sprained that he walked with a limp, and not a muscle of him but was lame and sore. Both forelegs were barked, too, where the toe calks had bitten.

JERRY

Worst of all, though, was the queer feeling in his eyes. They seemed to be burning in the sockets, and they ached—how they did ache! Away back into his head the pains seemed to shoot, as if some one were jabbing in hot needles. Also there were green and red and purple spots dancing before him. What did they mean? Only once before, when his wolf teeth had grown too long, had Jerry ever known anything like it. But this was many times worse. He could hardly see for the jumping, sliding, floating spots of brilliant color.

Yet he buckled to the work with dogged vigor, thrusting his galled shoulders against the collar, plunging at haphazard through jams, hitting a hub here, locking wheels there, backing with desperate energy out of snarls, scraping the fenders of stalled street-cars, but keeping the load

JUST HORSES

ever on the move. And ever Pat urged him on, now with an old-time chirrup of encouragement, now with oath and whip stroke.

Killing work it was. The day finished many an unsound horse, spoiled many a good one. But what would you? Commerce waited. The captains of trade thundered their orders over 'phones from behind the ramparts of roller-top desks. Move the goods! Fill the orders! Clear the wharves! Fill the cars!

Noon found Jerry and the piled-up truck moving at funeral pace in the thick of a jam that stretched from Pier A to Canal Street. There was neither time nor opportunity for eating. Jerry did not care. He had other things to think of than the full nosebag swung under the seat. There were the color spots, for instance. They were dancing thicker and faster. Then

JERRY

there were his bruised muscles. It was like tearing them apart every time he strained in the traces to start the mired wheels. And when the age-long day was done at last, he limped broken and spiritless to his stall, his great bulk an aching mass of dumb, helpless, unenlightened misery.

“Niver mind, old bye, termorrer’s Sunday,” said Pat, “and on Monday we’ll go out double.”

But Pat’s sympathy was late in coming. The mischief had been done. When on Monday morning Jerry was led out, stiff and sore, to be hooked up to a pole with a hired mate, he acted queerly. He could not find the water trough at the end of the stable until a hostler led him to it. On his way back he ran into a post, whereupon the hostler hit him with a shovel.

“Aisy, there, aisyy with that, now!”

JUST HORSES

warned Pat. "Raise yer hand to that horse agin an' I'll smash the face av ye."

"Then tend to yer fool plug yerself," retorted the hostler. "He's blind as a bat."

Although this charge Pat profanely denied, it was more than half true. Jerry himself was slow to believe the thing. There were no more dancing spots to bother him, but instead there seemed to have fallen a cloud upon things. Perhaps it would be better when he got out in the street. But in the broad daylight the cloud remained. Everything was vague, indistinct. Barely could he distinguish the outlines of his new mate on the other side of the pole. As for distant things, they were all merged into one blurred mass. What could it mean?

"Got a bit av a cold in yer eyes, eh?" said Pat after a hasty examination.



"I'LL SMASH THE FACE AV YE."

JERRY

Although the rain had come overnight and the streets had been left almost clear, Jerry proved an awkward horse that day. The things which he usually avoided—holes in the worn asphalt, car rails, man-hole covers and the like—he struck blunderingly with his hoofs. Time after time did a quick pull on the reins save him from sliding on his knees.

All this Jerry did not understand. Why could he not see where he was going? What was the matter with his eyes? If someone would only wipe them clear he would be all right once more.

But never again was Jerry to see clearly. Day by day things grew more blurred, day by day the cloud thickened. At the end of two weeks he was conscious only of a faint glimmer, and this in the brightest sunlight. A month passed, and then, one day, the cloud closed in to

JUST HORSES

shut out even this spark of comfort. Jerry was left in absolute, total darkness.

Mr. P. Dolan, when he saw the opaque, blue film that covered Jerry's eyes, when he had waved his cap before Jerry's nose without making the big chestnut dodge, when he was fully convinced that Jerry was wholly blind——well, Mr. P. Dolan made pretense of buckling a throat strap, but really he was using his coat sleeve to wipe something from his own red, roughened cheek. Very gently did he speak to Jerry all that week, often did he pat Jerry's powerful neck, long did he stand looking silently and remorsefully at Jerry's staring but sightless eyes.

“ I feel worse than a low-down, miserable thafe whin I luk at him,” he confided brokenly to Bridget. “ Sure, 'twas me as did it; an' him such a fine, willin' beast!”

“ But didn't ye see the vet'rinnery man;

JERRY

what had he to say?" asked Mrs. Dolan.

"Said it wor no use tinkerin' with the eyes av a horse that had been worked blind—*worked blind*, Bridget! And it wor me that did it!"

Meanwhile Jerry was acquiring the wisdom of the blind. He was learning to step high, to hold himself in readiness to recover from a slip or stumble, to feel the pole, to translate the message sent along the lines from driving hands to bits. Slowly, little by little, he developed that acuteness of hearing by which the ears are made to do the work of the eyes. You might have seen him swinging them—his ears, you know—one forward, the other back, to catch the individual sounds which go to make up the growling, murmuring chorus of the crowded streets.

He had grown stable wise, too. Turned loose in the morning, he could find his way

JUST HORSES

down the whole length of the building to the drinking trough and return without making a single false step. At night he would walk from the pole straight to his own stall, picking it out from near the center of a row of fifteen others exactly like it.

“To see him find his way around you’d never guess he had two blue ones,” was the way in which the stable boss expressed his appreciation.

Yet all this necessity for constant alertness was a strain on the nerves of Jerry. It wore sadly on his energy and spirits. He became fretful and nervous. In spite of generous feeding he lost flesh and failed in muscle.

As for Mr. P. Dolan, the early sharpness of his grief had become dulled. The sightless eyes of Jerry no longer troubled him greatly. And he had his dream of

JERRY

wealth to occupy his mind. Four double trucks carried the name of P. Dolan now, and he had given up the actual work of driving.

The new man put in charge of Jerry's team was a driver who had small sympathy for a horse that could not see. So those were sad days for Jerry. It was hard enough to go stumbling about the streets as one traveling in the dark, to wonder vaguely what all the noises meant, without the added hardship of having to depend upon a heedless driver who would allow you to step into a hole and then lash you for it. No more ribbons were braided into Jerry's mane and forelock. No kindly pats or soft words did he get. There were only harsh oaths, hard work, rough handling and a cuff or a kick at the end of the day. The new driver hated him thoroughly, and said so.

JUST HORSES

It ended in Jerry's being sold. He was turned out of the old stable where he had lived so long and where alone he knew his way about, he was barred from the old stall which had become so familiar, he was cast adrift among strange owners who knew little or nothing of the ways of blind horses.

What use to follow him through buffets and misfortunes? The recital would be drear and unprofitable. Let us look only to the end to which he came. That, at least, was not commonplace.

.

Out towards the head of a North River pier, picking his way through a lane between bales and barrels, came a broad-shouldered man, whose every movement was aggressive of prosperity and success. He wore a cream white Melton driving coat resplendent with a double row of

JERRY,

huge pearl buttons. He smoked a fat black cigar. One of his stubby fingers was burdened by a three-karat diamond. The red and white stripes of his shirt front and cuffs were half an inch wide.

This was Mr. P. Dolan, whose trucks might be seen in any part of the city. He had come out on the pier to make an estimate on the cost of moving a small mountain of mixed freight.

At the utmost edge of the pier, crouching on hands and knees as if he meant to throw himself over, was the ragged figure of an old man, a greasy old man, with long, unkempt beard.

“Come out o’ that, ye old fool,” roared Mr. P. Dolan, imperiously. “Don’t ye jump!”

The old man took no notice. He rocked back and forth and moaned something in whining monotone. Evidently his folly

JUST HORSES

was not self-destruction. A lounging 'longshoreman enlightened Mr. P. Dolan.

"The old Ginney lost his horse, that's all; a blind old skate that used to pull his pedlar's cart for him."

"Blind, was he," asked Mr. P. Dolan. "What color?"

"Red, sor; red an' black."

"With a white stocking on the off hind leg?"

"I belave he had, sor, an' he called him Jerry. The old skate got loose from the stable up the street and jumped off'n the dock jess a-purpose. Must 'ave done it on purpose, fer he walked clean out to the string piece, stopped a minnit, an' then jumped. I seen him. Guess he got tired of bein' blind an' workin' fer a Ginney."

Mr. P. Dolan flushed guiltily. Then he walked out to the pier head and stopped beside the moaning, crouching figure. To-

JERRY

gether they stared down into the black water that swirled and sucked about the spiles.

“Old Jerry, eh?” he muttered. “It’s too cussed bad! He and I started the business together, an’ now he’s—well, he’s done for. I wish—I—wish——”

Whatever it was that Mr. P. Dolan wished, he did not express it. He broke off abruptly, fished a roll of money from his pocket, peeled off a yellow-backed bank note and thrust it into the crooked fingers of the amazed old pedlar. Then he turned quickly, and, with his square chin sunk on his red and white striped shirt bosom, walked away.

KENO:

A CAYUSE KNOWN TO FAME

KENO:

A CAYUSE KNOWN TO FAME

FROM the very beginning the fates seemed to have marked Keno for the unusual. The first real crisis in his career turned on the character and complexion of two cards which Arkansas Pete skinned quite ostentatiously from the top of the pack and slid across a barrel-head to the expectant fingers of Sokalee Smith.

Had either one of those cards been the queen of clubs this record might have been far different; in fact, might never have seen the light. But neither was. A measly little trey of hearts was one, the other an utterly futile ace of spades. Yet Sokalee Smith, with a grunt of satisfaction in-

JUST HORSES

tended to deceive, slipped them both into the royal company of the three queens which had come in the deal and bet his hand just as if it contained the coveted quartette. Something told him that Arkansas Pete was backing two pairs. Instinct, you know, is a poor mentor when the game is draw and the cards are running against you. It was in this case. But Sokalee Smith had lost seven dollars silver, he had lost his rifle, he had lost his fringed buckskin shirt, he had lost his embroidered moccasins. Now Arkansas Pete had signified his willingness to bet the whole outfit against Sokalee's sole remaining possession, which was Keno, the pinto-marked hunting pony tied to the horse-rail over in front of the Agency office.

Sokalee looked out through the dingy windows of the Palace Hotel and scowled. Then he looked longingly at his lost prop-

KENO

erty, all piled carelessly on the floor by the gun-hand side of Arkansas Pete. His gaze also included the neat little pile of silver dollars on Pete's side of the barrel-head, and—well, Sokalee put his trust in that incomplete quartette, whereupon Keno, his pinto hunting pony, was to him irretrievably, irrevocably lost.

You may, lacking judgment, credit a Crow Indian with as many fine feelings and tender sentiments as you please. There's no law against it, east of the Big Muddy. But even a Beacon Hill humanitarian should know that a mixed-blood, such as Sokalee Smith, made up of three-quarters laziness to one-quarter vice, has within him no room for other traits. Still, something very like remorse troubled Sokalee Smith during his sober moments for days afterward.

As for Keno, if he did not welcome the

JUST HORSES

change of owners, he was utterly indifferent. True, he owed to Sokalee his training. That was no slight thing, either; for, in a country of horsemen born and bred to the business, there was none better than this same Sokalee Smith. It was the one useful thing he could do well. So, when at the age of two, the scraggly, long-legged, unpromising pinto cayuse came into the possession of Sokalee, there was begun for the colt the most thorough course in horse education that a Crow can give.

Hour after hour, day after day, month after month, Keno was manœuvred over the Reservation until he reached that acme of wisdom at which he understood, merely from the pressure of the rider's knees on his withers, when to break into a gallop, which way to swerve and when to come to a full stop. Mere bridle wisdom he de-

KENO

spised. With not even a rawhide throat-strap and no sign of bridle or girth, he would tear through the Reservation village at top speed; on his back, Sokalee sitting in all sorts of reckless attitudes, wasting good cartridges on the empty air, and between salvos proclaiming in maudlin tones his utter wickedness and unmatched courage.

It is no nice thing to say of him, but Keno liked it all. So far as he could, lacking the savage dare-deviltry and the alcoholic inspiration, the scraggly cayuse entered into the spirit of these unholy revels. With neck stretched out, ears flattened, nostrils belled, he would of his own accord put every ounce of muscle, lavish all his energy, on one of these spectacular dashes, at which the startled squaws looked askance and with mutterings as they scuttled for safety.

JUST HORSES

The long hunting trips up among the buttes, after red deer and antelope, Keno liked well, too. He had no fault to find with the hard rides to and from the Agency, when he sometimes carried his hulking master as many as seventy miles in a single day. It was better than being a squaw horse, dragging a lot of laden poles about.

And for service such as this Keno got no other recompense than the privilege of finding his own fodder. In summer this was not difficult, for the buffalo grass grew rich and juicy in the swales. In winter, of course, one never did get enough. One must paw and nose away the snow to crop the hardy bunch grass underneath. If the snow was deep, one took food and drink at the same time. For want of anything else, one could always browse cottonwood twigs. Keno had made many a

KENO

meal on them. It was not a sustaining diet, and it puckered the mouth, but it was far better than nothing.

Of currying and stabling Keno had absolutely no knowledge. He slept in the open, wherever he was picketed. In blizzard weather Indian ponies learn to forget all enmities and make common cause by crowding into a close bunch, head to head, until the Norther has passed. To be sure, you are terribly cold and often most woefully empty before it is safe to stir about. But what else is to be done? One winter of this sort, of course, would finish a stable-bred horse. Keno, while he did not grow fat on it, developed into a well-muscled little beast, sound of wind, with well-sloped shoulders, finely arched ribs, but otherwise as disreputable to look at as one could imagine. For one thing, his pinto markings, small oval splotches of reddish-

JUST HORSES

brown on a white background, did not make a color pleasing to the eye. A white jaw blaze that straggled down one side of his throat was no beauty mark.

But Arkansas Pete was no connoisseur of horse coats. He had heard that Sokalee Smith owned the fastest cayuse on the Reservation, and, in his sinful way, he was glad the pony was now his. No time did he lose in taking possession of his new mount. In less than half an hour after Sokalee had made that fruitless two-card draw, Keno, a heavy Mexican saddle on his back, and Arkansas Pete's one hundred and eighty pounds on top of that, was loping south at his best gait, his colt days behind him and all his surprising future ahead.

Without dwelling on the details of the ensuing months, it may be mentioned that Keno found them varied and full of di-

KENO

verse activities. 'Also he knew numerous owners, for the luck of Arkansas Pete did not abide. Keno's next engagement was on the X bar C ranch. There he learned the use of the noosed rope, the ways of cow-punchers and the vagaries of herded long-horns. There, for the first and only period of his life, Keno was a useful member of society.

But his very proficiency as a cow-pony brought a change of condition that landed Keno, with some dozen other short horses, on a big ranch down in the Panhandle country.

Here began a new and curious existence. For many days Keno could not figure it out at all. There were no steers to rope, no work to be done. Yet every morning he was saddled and ridden out on a smooth field with a lot of other ponies. At first they did nothing but canter aimlessly

JUST HORSES

about, sometimes in circling squads, again scattering to different quarters only to be whirled suddenly and rushed together in one confused clump.

Next the riders brought out long-handled mallets and began to knock a small wooden ball about. It seemed very silly to Keno. Why couldn't they get up a race? After three or four days of this nonsense the ponies were one morning lined up in two squads before some tall poles at opposite ends of the field. A bell was rung and someone tossed out a ball. There was a grand rush. Keno found himself in the van. Just as they were about to meet the opposing squad, Keno felt his rider swing in the saddle and strike the ball. After the bounding sphere he was urged, slam through the ruck of pivoting, snorting, shying ponies.

At last Keno knew what it was all

KENO

about. The ball was, as you might put it, a steer to be cut out. Your business was to follow it so that your rider could whack it with his stick. Good! There was something in that. Keno began to watch the ball. In a few days he understood that the scheme was to drive the ball between those opposite posts and to keep the other riders from driving it back.

Certainly it was novel work. There was fun in it, too. Of course, the sticks sometimes rapped your shins, but you didn't mind that when once you were interested in the game. Nor did you mind the crowding and jostling after you got used to it. One learned to turn almost in one's tracks at the slightest tug on the bits, to dash off at topspeed when you were given free rein, and to swerve to right or left with the swaying of your rider's body.

Very quickly did Keno pick up knowl-

JUST HORSES

edge of these things, partly because of the early training he had received from Sokalee Smith, partly because of his experience as a cutting-out pony. It was not so with all the horses, however. Some of them stubbornly refused to be forced into a skirmish, some never seemed to understand the importance of following the ball.

Reward for Keno's aptitude came one April day when, with his shaggy coat clipped until you could see every ridged muscle of his lithe legs, his tail banded to a scant fourteen inches, and his mane and forelock hogged to most artistic brevity, he was led into San Antonio and shipped North in a palace stock-car with others of his kind, to fill a rush order from Myopia and Meadowbrook clubmen. For Keno, the shaggy cayuse that Sokalee Smith had put up to back his faith in three queens,

KENO

was now become one of those sporty equine aristocrats, a polo pony.

When he was taken out for his first big game, no one who had known Keno as an Indian cayuse, or as a cow-pony, would have recognized him, unless by the peculiar throat blaze or the pinto markings. Keno hardly knew himself. On his fore-legs were elastic knee boots, on his back was a light-weight English saddle, and thrown over his shoulders, a gaudy field blanket with monograms in the corners.

With high disdain Keno regarded his new master. That slim-legged, smooth-faced, dandified chap ride? Keno guessed not. It would take about three jumps to send that fellow flying. Keno was used to a full-grown man rider, he was; a man with whiskers on his face, a red bandanna knotted about his throat, and sheepskin chaps on his legs. Look at those yellow

JUST HORSES

boots, and those tight trousers, and that French flannel shirt! That fellow play polo? Keno snorted derisively.

Pricking his ears forward at every new sight and sound, Keno stood dazed and bewildered. Suddenly, from the far-end of the field, came a crash of music that set him dancing at such a rate that the groom who held his bridle called for help. It was Keno's first introduction to a band, and it moved him to action.

When the music stopped, a bugle was blown and two sets of ponies were ridden prancingly into the field. The united efforts of three stable-boys kept Keno from jumping that whitewashed boundary. He saw the goal flags snapping, he saw the sticks, he watched the line-up, and he knew what was coming. He wanted to be in it. They had another séance with him when the gong was rung, and the ball was put in play.

KENO

“Hi say, Ennery, ’e knows the gyme, orl right,” commented a groom who had watched Keno’s antics.

“Too bloomin’ well,” answered the perspiring stable-boy at Keno’s head.

An age it seemed, but at last Keno’s turn came. Sliding from a knee-barked, lathered, wind-blown mount, the slim-legged man jerked a thumb toward the pinto pony.

“I’ll try the green one next period. Have him ready.”

Barely had the new master touched the pigskin before Keno began to jump stiff-legged. The man was still in the saddle after the third jump, so Keno concluded that he could ride. Inside of five minutes Keno had decided that his new master could play polo. And such playing! Keno would not have believed the fellow had it in him. Back-hand strokes on the off or

JUST HORSES

near side, dribbling on the jump; clean, fair smashes for goal; close, hot work in scrimmage—why, the man played like a fiend. No cow-puncher down on the Texas ranch could handle a mallet like that, no, sir! Nor could one of them hit a ball so far or so true.

Keno found himself straining every nerve to know and do the will of his new master. Never before had he handled his legs so neatly, never had he shown such bursts of speed. There was one long run down the boards, with the whole field tearing behind, that fairly set Keno wild, and when his rider, with a quick forehand drive, sent the ball flying between the posts, Keno knew that he had found a worthy master.

And at the finish of the game, as Keno watched him stride off to the tea-house to be congratulated on winning six straight



THE MAN PLAYED LIKE A FIEND

KENO

goals, he was prouder of him than he had been of Sokalee Smith when Sokalee “shot up” the Agency, even prouder than he had been when he helped “Buck” Masters win a steer-roping match down at the Albuquerque fair.

Also, Keno was proud of himself. Did a cow-pony ever fall into such luck before? Why, he was overwhelmed with luxuries and attentions. How good it was to be washed and scraped and rubbed and polished after a hard-fought game. How thoroughly comfortable one felt, covered with warm blankets and standing in a light, roomy box-stall, carpeted with clean straw. Rich clover hay, a whole measure of oats, and a bucket of clear water—it was fare fit for a king of horses! There was even a piece of rock-salt in his feed-box. It all seemed too good to be true. Surely, it could not last.

JUST HORSES

But last it did; not months merely, but years. And in those years Keno learned the game of polo, learned all its ins and outs, its tricks of skill, its feats of daring; learned it as few ponies, before or since, have done. For was not his master the crack No. 2 man of America's best team, and was not Keno the pick of his master's stables? Was it not Keno who was carefully rounded into form for the big tournaments, and was he not saved for the critical periods? Did he not have a hand in winning nearly a score of cups? And last, was not Keno one of the select few taken clear across the ocean to try for a Hurlingham trophy against the flower of all England? To be sure, they did not get the cup, but they did compel the respect of the Britishers, and Keno had the personal satisfaction of beating out, in a run for the ball, a half-blood Arab mare

KENO

that had fetched two hundred guineas on the block at Tattersalls!

In the ordinary course of events Keno would have rusted out, gone stale, or broken a leg-bone in stopping a hard-swung mallet. But it was the extraordinary which the Fates seemed to have allotted to Keno. Thus it happened that, at the very climax of his polo career, Keno left the turfed arena for the public boards.

It all came about as the result of an impromptu reception given to Keno at the end of a big game in which he had distinguished himself. Some two dozen elaborately dressed ladies patted various parts of Keno's shining coat and asked each other unanimously: "Isn't he a dear?" One of the ladies, who wore a striking green and white gown, and who talked in soft, gurgling, musical tones, went still farther. She rubbed her cheek against

JUST HORSES

Keno's blazed nose, smoothed his ears, looked into his big, keen eyes, and declared him to be the most intelligent horse she had ever seen.

"He looks just as though he could talk if he wanted to," she gurgled. "Oh, if only I had such a horse for my new piece; there's to be a horse in it, you know."

"Allow me to present Keno," said the pinto's gallant owner.

"Oh, really, I couldn't think——"

"I shall feel hurt if you don't accept."

Thus it was settled. No more did Keno follow the flying ball. Instead, he was taken off to a city boarding-stable where he remained in fretful idleness until the rehearsals began. Then, in a curious, big, barnlike place, from which one looked out on an immense sweep of cloth-draped seats, Keno was drilled for his part.

KENO

It was not much that he had to do. All that was expected of him was to stand around while a lot of folks talked until, at the proper moment, the gurgling-voiced lady made a rush for him, climbed more or less gracefully on his back and exclaimed: "Now to the rescue!" Then Keno would dash some forty feet across the stage, run up a twenty-foot incline, turn sharply around the corner of a canvas mountain peak—and it was all over.

Keno regarded it as the most absurd performance in which he had ever figured. After the opening night, however, Keno was somewhat better satisfied. When he was allowed to walk out on the stage he was surprised to find the great building, which he had always seen dark and empty, ablaze with light and crowded to the doors. There was music, too. Keno heard a hum of surprise and admiration as he showed

JUST HORSES

himself. And when his mistress, with her "Now to the rescue!" flung herself into the saddle and he made his brief run up the incline there broke loose such a storm of applause that Keno wondered what could have happened.

It was not long before he understood that the noise was all in his honor. He came to look forward to the moment when, by merely appearing from behind the wings, he could rouse that appreciative hum, and the thrill which he felt when he heard the storm of applause rising from the galleries, was something very fine, indeed. As for petting and coddling, Keno never dreamed that a pony could get so much of it. In the boarding-stable he was a privileged character, a personage.

"That's Miss Allstar's pony," the stablemen would say to visitors. "Yes, he's the one she uses in the show. Seen him do

KENO

his act? Clever little beast he is, and knowing—say, there ain't a thing that little devil don't know."

The stage folks, from the soubrette to the first old lady, rendered to Keno unceasing homage. They brought him apples and peanuts and high-priced confectionery. They even offered him bunches of cut roses to browse. He came to have a nice discrimination in the quality of chocolate bonbons and fruits glacé. His bits were of solid silver. He wore a silken girth strap. Fresh ribbon rosettes dangled under each ear.

Little by little the fame of Keno spread abroad. His name figured in the cast of characters. His photograph was displayed in the lobby. The manager had made for him a three-sheet poster. Perhaps this appealed strongest to Keno. Miss Allstar had one pasted in his box-

JUST HORSES

stall, where he could see, at any time of day, the flattering presentment of himself. She declared that Keno would gaze admiringly at it for hours on end.

“But I know how it is,” she confessed. “I did the same with the first lithograph of myself; and a most wretched wood-cut it was, too.”

Did the vanity of Keno grow with his fame? They say it did. Miss Allstar is most positive, and she knew him best. He was no longer content to await his cue half hidden in the wings. Gradually he would edge toward the centre of the stage. You could see him prick forward his ears, as if to listen for that murmur of appreciation which he knew was his due. When the house was light and the applause thin, he would sulk for hours afterward; but a holiday audience, with its big crowd of noisy children, put him in angelic humor.

KENO

Perhaps the high tide of his glory came when, at a reception given in his honor at Miss Allstar's city home, he was presented to all the great personages of the stage. It was Keno's first appearance in a drawing room, but you would never have guessed it. He behaved as if he had attended afternoon teas all his life. Soka-lee Smith would have stared his eyes out could he have seen his pinto cayuse in that company. Under a bower of roses and smilax stood Keno, with a Daghestan rug under his hoofs. Occasionally he nibbled at a huge bunch of sweet clover set in a Satsuma vase. Considering that it was mid-winter, the clover represented more or less luxury. Miss Allstar had sent to Florida for it.

But Keno betrayed no ill-bred astonishment at anything, taking it all as a matter of course. With polite condescension

JUST HORSES

he allowed a managerial autocrat to feed him sugar plums, and for a prima donna he drank Russian tea from a Haviland cup. To be sure, he frightened a Swiss maid almost into convulsions by chewing one of her apron strings, and he disturbed the haughty dignity of the English butler by sniffing the white-stockinged calves of that sedate individual. Otherwise, Keno acted very much as matinée idols usually do on such occasions, and trotted back to his stable, after it was all over, with high held head.

Could this pampered, blasé, finicky pony be Keno, the Indian cayuse, that had roamed the Reservation, that had worked with the X bar C outfit, that had taken delight in the wild scrimmages of the polo field? No one would have guessed as much.

But the higher one climbs, you know,

KENO

the greater one's pride, the more disastrous the fall. With the end of January, it was concluded that Miss Allstar's piece had about finished its Broadway run. Rehearsals for a new one were started.

"Oh, dear," pouted Miss Allstar, when she had finished reading her new lines, "you haven't made a part for my darling Keno."

The great playwright shrugged his shoulders and scowled.

"Couldn't you write him in somewhere?" she pleaded.

"No, madam, I could not," snapped the G. P. wrathfully. "I'm not constructing a zoo."

Then Miss Allstar wept. She indulged in tragedy business. She appealed to the manager, threatened to throw up her part, to break her contract.

JUST HORSES

“It *is* a shame; but just think of the gorgeous gowns you are to wear. It’s going to cost me a fortune to dress your part,” suggested the manager. He was a diplomat, of course. If he hadn’t been he would have been in other business.

Miss Allstar did think of the gorgeous gowns. And she forgot the slight to Keno. So, when the old piece was finally taken off and the new one put on, Keno was sent from the expensive city stable to Miss Allstar’s country house, where he had for human company an Irish stableman who held in contempt all things theatrical, and a Cockney groom who drank gin.

Why he should be thus banished, Keno could not at all comprehend. Never in all his varied career had he known such isolated monotony. One day was exactly like another, and each was an age long.

KENO

The only break came in the forenoon, when he was trotted up and down the road by the Cockney groom for a half-hour's exercise. The rest of the day was spent in stall-standing, wearily looking out of a little grated window, waiting, waiting, waiting—for what?

During the first week or two Keno kept hoping that it was merely a temporary rest. To-morrow, perhaps, he would be sent for. Then he would know again the hum of the theatre, sniff the excitement of the play, hear once more the thunders of applause. But week after week dragged on and no such summons came. Keno had left the public boards forever. He had been put on the shelf. 'Already his name was forgotten.

Keno began to refuse the oats and hay which were put in his crib. His ribs began to show through his once nicely rounded

JUST HORSES

barrel. His quarters lost their plumpness. If you had watched him, as he stood there, alone, in the still, empty stable, you might have seen great salty drops slip from the corners of his big, sad, intelligent eyes. Was it grief, or was it only a touch of influenza?

One night in April, when the end of the show-season was in sight, a telegram was brought to Miss Allstar in her dressing-room. It was signed, "Murphy," and read: "Your pony bad off. Shall I get horse-doctor?"

With the best veterinary surgeon to be found in the city Miss Allstar hurried to the stall where Keno, a sorry shadow of his former self, lay with drooping head and a look of mournful reproach in his dull eyes. The learned V. S. used all his skill. He hoisted the limp, wasted form in slings, he forced hot mixtures down

KENO

Keno's throat, he wound bandages and applied poultices.

But he had come too late. All his work was in vain. With that reproachful look still in his big eyes, the vital spark that had once burned so brightly in the noble little pony, flickered feebly for a time, and then went out.

"Mighty curious, too," said the puzzled veterinary. "Wasn't anything particular ailing with him, that I could see; he just didn't seem to have any spirit left."

Miss Allstar was sobbing into the folds of a horse blanket. "It—it's (sniff) a-all (snuffle) m-m-my fault. Po-o-o-or Keno! I b-b-bub-broke your heart, didn't I?"

Whereupon the heartless veterinary surgeon muttered something about "fool women," packed up his bottles and left. Miss Allstar heard, but she said she didn't care. To this day she declares that Keno

JUST HORSES

died from a broken heart and from nothing else, and that the great playwright who was really to blame, is a sinful, soulless wretch!

THE LIFE OF THE
CROWDED WAY

THE LIFE OF THE CROWDED WAY

ONE begins, of course, on a farm. It may be a very ordinary sort of farm, where they raise hogs and corn as well as horses, a farm where you are broken and trained by a Danish-born ex-herring fisherman, for example. Or it may be that you start on a fancy stock farm, where they breed to the line, where they give you as much care as if you were an heir to a throne, where there are box stalls, velvety paddocks, Yankee trainers, Cockney grooms, balanced rations, and all that.

But start any way you may, if you come up fit, if you are the cream of the get, the chances are nine to one that, when

JUST HORSES

you are two, or three, or four, you will leave the pasture with its sweet grass and soft brook water, you will quit forever the yielding dirt roads of the country, and you will be sent to do your work in the crowded ways of the city.

Your nerves will be tested and your temper tried before you are city broken; but if you come to it young, if the thing is done properly, and if you've any sense of your own, it will soon be over with.

True, it is tough, at times. If you are, for instance, a high-strung coach, fresh from a Michigan stud farm, and find yourself with your tail sewed up in red flannel and a tag on your bridle, abruptly shunted out, car sick and nervous, into the din and clamor of the crowded ways, you will probably make a mess of things. You will hear whirring sounds, clangs of gongs, shouts of men. You will dodge

THE CROWDED WAY

and rear and try to squat on your haunches. Then, just as likely as not, some fool car hostler will slap you across the face with a rope halter or kick you in the ribs. That will be his way of teaching you manners. It's a poor way, of course. Your head will buzz, your bones will ache, and you will be on the verge of panic. You will wish in vain that you were safely back in paddock or pasture, kicking the turf and practicing your colt antics.

Almost before you know it, however, you will be in the hands of men who understand you and know what you need. Then, before you have had time to eat your head off, you will be set to work doing some one of the thousands of things still left for horses to do.

For a week or so you will have a tremendously uncomfortable time of it. You

JUST HORSES

will worry your driver a lot, and you will be of precious little use to any one. Then, gradually, you will learn many things. You will come to know that the strange devices which move about the streets are not designed expressly to do you harm. Those terrifying red and black affairs with fat low wheels and big, glaring eyes, things which go pop-pop-pop and occasionally snort weirdly, they will do you no injury, in spite of their ferocious aspect and the fantastic garb of the folks who ride in them. At first you will start and prance when they shoot past, but you will be surprised to see how quickly you will get over that. Other horses, you will notice, pay them no heed. Your mate, if you are working double, will give them not even a glance. In less than a fortnight you will not twitch a muscle when a big, vermillion-colored touring

THE CROWDED WAY.

car, with a bear-skin-coated, blue-goggled, leather-capped chauffeur puffs by your nose. You will learn to know the ring of a cable-car gong, the rattle of an ambulance, the overhead roar of the elevated cars, the shrill whir of the trolley wire, and the other major notes that go to make up the thundering chorus of the city streets. You will be able to distinguish—but this will only come in time—the warning clang-clang of fire apparatus, and you will hug the curb when you hear it.

Your first trip across a big bridge will make you prick your ears and set your flanks aquiver. One moment you are on solid pavement, with the thronged sidewalks and towering buildings shutting in on either hand; a moment later, and your hoofs are stamping hollow notes from splintered planks, which seem to

JUST HORSES

give and sway and vibrate in a most alarming fashion. Peering out beyond the blinders, you see that you are up in the air. With ears pointed, nostrils blowing, you turn and look. You crowd against the pole and dance a bit. But you get over safe, and when you have crossed half a dozen times you forget all your fears. It is much the same in traveling on ferry-boats.

In the end you come to see that you have your place in all this tangle and din, to feel that you have certain rights of way, and that you need have no care other than to keep your head and handle your feet. This last is no easy thing to learn. You know this after you have barked your knees over manhole covers and strained your thighs with side slips on flat car rails or greasy asphalt. You plant your caulks with care, and you acquire the

THE CROWDED WAY,

knack of finding a toe hold. You learn to throw your weight on the collar when you see a sharply tilted ferry bridgeway, and to settle on the backing straps when a helmeted policeman grabs your bits in the thick of a street jam.

Such wisdom as this, and much more besides, you must get before you are city broken. But when you have it, when you know the rules of the road, then you go about in the crowded ways, doing as best you can the thing which you were bred to do.

Perhaps you are a big ton-weight Percheron from out Iowa way. Then your business will be the heavy haul. You will wear a Boston backing-hitch rig, with brass-tipped hame irons and half-inch leather traces that an elephant couldn't break. You may go out single on a Custom House truck, but the chances are that

JUST HORSES

you'll do your work in double harness; or, it may be, in a triple-breast team with a brewer's wagon, or a beef or flour truck, behind you. Long hours will be your lot. You will be hooked up at five or six in the morning, and you'll not stable until six or seven o'clock at night. You will need all your weight, too, for they do pile the freight on those big trucks. Cold weather you'll not mind a bit. There'll be exercise enough to keep you warm. But you'll sweat when August comes, and at all seasons there will be plenty of work for your big muscles to do.

Yet they'll treat you well in the heavy draught service. They'll feed from eighteen to twenty-four quarts of good oats a day, you'll always find a lump of rock salt in your manger, they will curry you good, look sharply after your feet, doctor a shoulder gall the minute it shows, and

THE CROWDED WAY.

give you two days' resting swing a week. Kind of them? Not a bit. It's business. You cost a lot, you do, and you earn your keep a dozen times over.

If you stand only fifteen two or three, if you're blockily built, with a banged tail and plenty of spring in knees and hock, then there's an entirely different lot of work cut out for you. You'll be mated and hitched to something light and shiny, something with rubber-tired wheels and broadcloth cushions. It may be a brougham or a park carriage. Or, if you're big enough, you will work single in a jiggly, two-wheeled trap or a private hansom with nickel gig lamps. You'll wear quarter blankets with somebody's monogram or crest in the corner. You may be overworked, but the chances are that you'll be stall-weary oftener than harness-tired.

JUST HORSES

Most likely you'll live on the second or third floor of a big boarding stable along with two or three hundred other horses. If they feed you full rations, and the hostlers don't beat you with shovels, you'll be lucky. Make friends with the hostlers if you can. They're a cheap lot, those you find in boarding stables, and often they're wicked ugly on the sly. If you must kick one, kick him hard. But don't bite. Nothing gives a horse a bad name quicker, and besides it isn't manners.

You'll look rather gay in your silver-mounted harness, with perhaps a liveried driver and footman on the box, and you'll have a lot of fun jingling your pole-chains and stepping high along the avenues and park drives. But three or four years of this will take the ginger out of you. You'll lose form and action. Your knees and hocks will grow stiff from the

THE CROWDED WAY.

long waits in the cold and the sudden starts from the curb.

Then you will begin your visits to the sales stable. You will not wear monogrammed quarter blankets and crested rosettes after that. You'll pull public hacks and grocers' carts and milk wagons.

Now, with a stepper it's different. They are the real horse aristocrats. They come to town in style, traveling in palace stock cars—padded box stalls, you know—with their own stable grooms sleeping at their heels. Those are the ones that have registered sires—out of Wild Fire by Sir Brandon (2.10¼). At the big Garden sales you may see them. They'll have their names, pedigree, and owner's statement printed in a book, and the bidding will start at two hundred with fifty-a-clip better until the hammer falls. And you'll hear the auctioneer saying

JUST HORSES

things like this: "There, gentlemen, there's as promising a little mare as you'd wish to draw rein over. As you see by our catalogue, she's a Directum. Looks it, too, don't she? A Directum, gentlemen! Couldn't ask for any better blood than that, could you? Now, if you want something for matinée use or Speedway brushes, here she is. Mouth like a kid glove, disposition as sweet as new milk, clean legs, and dead game, I'll promise you. Trainer, just let out a few links of chain lightning around the cinder track, will you? That's it! Give her room, gentlemen. Stand back at the turn! How's that for action? Clean and clear, eh? No boots, you notice. There! Now she warms up to it. Hi! hi! Clear track! But you should see her step a mile straight away. Gentlemen, if that little mare can't knock splints off fifteen I—I'll eat her harness.

THE CROWDED WAY

She's a Directum, remember, and her blood sister has a record of eleven and a half. Whoa! That'll do. Now, what am I offered? Two hundred? Fifty? Three hundred, I have. And a quarter, now? I am bid three hundred and a quarter, gentlemen! Who'll make it—ah, fifty! Thank you. Three fifty, gentlemen!"

That's the way it goes when you're from Palo Alto or Columbus, or Terre Haute, or Lexington, Kentucky, and promise speed. Suppose you make good? Then you're in clover. You become the pet of somebody at once. You go to a private stable — steam-heated, electric-lighted, composition floors, sanitary plumbing, and braided straw mats for your box stall. You'll eat selected oats and fancy hay. You'll be exercised in double blankets and hood, and two or three times a week, when the stock mar-

JUST HORSES

ket's not too lively, you'll be taken out to a sixty-pound spider-wheeled road wagon for a jog up the Speedway or out on the Lake drive. You'll win a brush or two, and you'll feel so cocky that you'd go to the post with Lou Dillon or any other record-smasher as quick as you would tackle a country trotter. And the man in driving coat and dust goggles will be just as bad. He'll begin looking up events and talking knowingly with trainers, and at the club he will throw out hints to the effect that he might like to meet some one on a track somewhere—oh, quite privately, you know, of course—for a little purse.

No, there's nothing much better than being in the Gentlemen's Driving Class. But, really, those swells have little to do with the great work of the crowded ways—no more than have the hunters, who

THE CROWDED WAY

come to town during show week, or the saddle horses, that live a sort of hothouse existence in the riding academies and on the park bridle-paths.

It's the common, every-day light draught, such as are sold in carload lots at the Chicago and Buffalo markets, that do the real work of the city. They come in from the West and East and South. They are shipped in from Canada. They haven't a number in any stud book. They boast no registered sires. They are of any and all breeds. They never see the inside of the Garden. They are to be found at the sales stables about the Bull's Head, where their destinies are shuffled carelessly at the rate of two to the minute on busy days.

When they are young and sound and well mated they are gobbled up by the big concerns. The express companies use a

JUST HORSES

lot of them. You're well taken care of in an express stable, but the drivers get out all that's in you. They want tight traces and a lively pace, with a ton or two on the axles. Wait until you've been through the holiday rush and you'll know what work is. You'll be all right, though, so long as your hoofs stand the pounding; but the moment your feet go bad back you travel to the sales stable. Then there's trouble ahead. If you are lucky you'll go out of town with some farmer, and six months of dirt roads will put you in shape again. But you're most liable to stay in the city as a cheap horse. A delivery wagon is the most probable thing. It's not a pleasant prospect—scatter-brained youngsters for drivers, third-class boarding stables, long hours, poor feed, and the least possible care.

At this period you may expect almost

THE CROWDED WAY

any kind of work, from general carting to pulling a Fifth Avenue stage. If you're real skinny, have a spavined leg, and look fit for crow bait, then you may be enlisted into the service of Uncle Sam and haul a mail wagon through the city. But, perhaps, some self-respecting junk collector or fruit vender will buy you. He will feed you enough to work on, at least. Or you may be hooked up with another relic to a moving van.

To be sure, there are a few snug berths, even for mongrel light draughts in good condition. There's the Fire Department. If you happen to get on an engine or hose wagon or ladder-truck team, and if your nerves are sound, you are, barring accidents, well fixed for years to come. It's a matter of nerves, however. If you've got too many you'll not last in that business. If you get in the habit of listening for

JUST HORSES

the jigger, and fussing every time you're run under the collar, you'll fret the fat off your ribs in no time at all. Then they'll ship you back. But if you take things easy in the house, put your last pound on the traces when you get the word, and don't get excited when bricks and copings fall about you, you'll be taken as good care of as a Speedway crack, and you'll last as long as it is good for a horse to stay in harness.

If you have clean legs, good wind, and strong loins, there's one chance in a thousand that you'll be picked out for service with the mounted police. Then you'll wear a yellow-trimmed saddle blanket, and carry a rider who will treat you as you would like to be treated. During most of your tour of duty you'll do nothing save stand on a park roadway watching the high-toned rigs go by, but once in a while

THE CROWDED WAY

you'll have a chance to show your speed in rounding up a runaway.

You may start high or you may start low, but mainly you will finish about the same. There may be a few homes for aged and disabled horses—actually, there are such places—but their capacity is limited, and for the great majority there awaits the three-dollar knock-down with a ride in White's hansom as an end to all things.

You reach the three-dollar mark after you've been through a lot, which it is not nice to think about. You hobble up to the block with sprung knees, sunken eyes, obvious ribs, and stiffened hocks.

“Here's a frame for you, gents, an elegant frame,” shouts the auctioneer, and the buyers smile at the ancient jibe. “Who wants the old skate? He's warranted to stand without hitching, gents.”

JUST HORSES

The “ gents ” laugh, and when the bidder gets his three-dollar prize they roar.

That's your last sale, however. Somewhere, perhaps on the very corner where you once gave a driver an anxious moment as you danced about and tried to tear things loose, you drop. They take off the harness and leave you. A policeman telephones to White—White of the Dead Horse Dock. Then you ride in the hansom. It isn't a hansom, of course. It's a low-swung, four-wheeled, covered box with a windlass that hauls you in.

But you're past caring. What if they do take you to Barren Island? What if your bones are worked up into toothbrush handles, your hair into mattress stuffing, and the rest of you into glue and fertilizer? It's all in the running. You have done your share of the city's endless toiling. It has used you up and you have

THE CROWDED WAY

been cast aside. Well, the city does that with men, too. But you have lived the life of the crowded way—lived it from top to bottom—and if that isn't worth while, what is?

THE STORY OF PER-
ICLES OF SPREAD
EAGLE BATTERY

THE STORY OF PER- ICLES OF SPREAD EAGLE BATTERY

FEW horses achieve monuments or undying fame. With Pericles it was different. Possibly you never heard of Pericles—not the old Grecian, you know—but Pericles of Spread Eagle Battery. Pericles has a monument. Perhaps he didn't achieve it. In a sense, it was thrust upon him, as you shall learn.

Most war horses begin life prosaically enough. This was the case with Pericles. When Sumter was fired upon, Pericles was stumping a six-acre lot on an Indiana farm. It was neither a thrilling nor a

JUST HORSES

glorious business, this stump pulling. You waited until the chains were properly fastened; then as the word was given you, you jumped ahead for all that was in you, rammed your shoulders against the collar, and dug in your toes as lively as you could. Generally you were brought up all standing, with a fine rattle of trace chains and a snap of whiffletrees, because the stump refused to budge. When they had dug with spades and cut away more roots, you tried it again, and you jerked the old thing a rod or two before you could stop.

The six-acre lot was more than half stumped when Pericles went to the front with a volunteer cavalry regiment. His business was to draw an ancient brass three-pounder, of which the men of Company K, who had made the contribution, were immensely proud. They expected to see it rout the enemy the first time it

THE STORY OF PERICLES

barked. You cannot imagine their deep disgust when on being brigaded the brass piece was lost in the shuffle. Pericles was transferred to a regular battery.

It was all one to Pericles. When you have been unceremoniously yanked from the peaceful routine of stump pulling, when you have had a branding iron used on your left shoulder, when you have been hustled aboard stock-cars, jostled and rattled and banged about for three or four days, and finally have been ushered into the wild turmoil of an army field headquarters, you are not likely to notice whether you are hooked to a brass three-pounder or put in as nigh lead on a six-horse team with a big siege-gun behind you. It might have been a breaking plow or a canal boat, for all Pericles knew. Indeed, it pulled like both together, when the wheels mired, for the old six-pounder

JUST HORSES

weighed almost a ton by itself, not to mention the stout oak carriage and the loaded limber-chest.

That which bothered Pericles most was the man on his back. Pericles had been ridden before, of course. Also he had jumped heavy loads over bad going in a hurry. It was the combination of being ridden and driven at the same time, which was new, as well as the sensation of hearing other horses pounding along behind him.

Not all horses would have stood it, but Pericles, strong of loin, heavy of shoulder and well barreled, was built for just such work. One soon gets used to things too, when new experiences turn up, not once a year, but every hour. You simply had to get used to things in the Spread Eagle Battery, for the brigade commander was a West-Pointer who knew the

THE STORY OF PERICLES

use of six-pounders and believed in keeping them hot on all possible occasions. Never, though, could Pericles forget the first time he went into action. The whole morning he had been jumping and quivering. What could all the rattling and banging be about? Why did the air smell so queer? Where were they going, and what were they about to do?

For hours they had been moving along a densely crowded road, edging their way past long lines of foot and horse. Suddenly the bugles called high and clear. Commands were sharply passed. He was urged into a gallop. Through a fence they went, across a field and straight toward a bare knoll which seemed to be in the thick of the muss.

Things went whizzing over his head. Other things pattered in the dust before him. In the air above were noises

JUST HORSES

—shrieking, whining noises, and now and then an ominous “R-r-r-r-ip boo-m-m-m!” It all was disturbing. Pericles tried to stop and dance and snort, but the long-legged man on his back dug boot heels into his ribs and yelled tumultuously. There was nothing to do except to go ahead, and he did that with all the mighty strength of his big muscles. The other five horses did the same, and with a slap-bang bumpety-bump that old gun was snaked to the crest of the knoll. Then, with a whirl which set his head spinning, they were turned, the gun unhooked and the whole six of them galloped off with the caisson down under the brow of the hill, where they could stand in comparative safety, watching the cannoneers swarming about the pieces like so many jumping-jacks.

It was there that Pericles began to get

THE STORY OF PERICLES

acquainted with the ways of Slat. Littlefield, the long-geared, smooth-tongued driver of the lead team. Slat. was patting his neck and talking to him in peculiarly soothing tones.

“ So-o-o, there, old tamarack. Easy, boy. Never you mind the Minié-balls; they won’t hurt you, less’n one hits you, and you’ll never know about it if it does. So-o-o-o, now, easy does it. Yes, that’s a four-pound shell coming this way—miauw-wow—with the fuse fizzing. Bang! There she goes, and never touched a hair of us. The Johnnies ain’t got the range, nor they won’t get it after the Spread Eagle boys get to work. So-o-o, now. You’ll hear a heap bigger noise than that in about two shakes. There goes the powder charge into our old Slabsides. Now the wad. Ram her home, Seth! And the pill! Now, my boy, easy with you. It’s

JUST HORSES

a-comin', it's a-comin— Whoa up, there! So-o-o-o! You're all——”

But the rest was lost in a sudden tremendous roar which seemed to split the sky and drop the pieces on his head. He reared and pawed the air in blind panic. He danced sidewise into his mate. He plunged forward. There came another roar and another. He could feel the earth shake under his hoofs. A dense, gray, pungent-smelling cloud drifted down from the hilltop and enveloped him. He breathed and ejected it in short, excited snorts.

In fact, Pericles did most of the things which green artillery horses usually do. When it was over, when the distant battery had ceased to answer, when the crack and rattle of small arms could be heard no longer, he stood, nerve-shaken, foam-flecked, red-nostriled — but thoroughly

THE STORY OF PERICLES

battle broken. Why, in less than a fortnight he would calmly crop the grass forty yards behind the trail stakes while Spread Eagle' six-pounders barked themselves hoarse. Nor was this all. For Slat. Littlefield he had developed huge respect. Who wouldn't? Wasn't he the smartest team driver in the battery?

Couldn't he bring old Slabsides to the front, unhook and get away with the limber before any other gun was in position? Was there a man in the regiment who could yell louder, ride harder, work faster or talk slicker than Slat. Littlefield? Hadn't the senior Colonel said so himself? Didn't the companies cheer as Slat. tore past on his big gray, with two men on the gun and five on the limber chest, to open the ball?

Besides, Slat. Littlefield knew how to take care of horses as well as how to han-

JUST HORSES

dle them. Other drivers might miss connections with the quartermaster's wagons, but Slat. always managed to have his grain bags full. And who dressed the saber slash in Pericles' neck after Jeb. Stuart's cavalry charged over the guns? It was Slat. Who was it dug the spent musket-ball out of Pericles' rump, picked the piece of shell from his shoulder and bathed the hurts with liniment? Slat.

It was Slat. also who taught Pericles to lie down when the chain shot and shrapnel got to whistling too close overhead. Other things did Slat. teach him during the long months in permanent camp; such as the standing trot, which keeps one's nerves quiet while waiting orders under fire, the fancy pirouette, purely unessential, and a burlesque "attention" pose which never failed to make the inspection officers grin.

THE STORY OF PERICLES

It was pure luck, of course; yet horses came and horses went, lead mates, swings and wheelers, but Pericles stayed in the traces, hauling old Slabsides up and down the Potomac and across Virginia, leading Spread Eagle Battery into all sorts of violent musses, and escaping with no more than an occasional scratch. Slat. Littlefield stayed too, thwarting each attempted promotion by some reckless, lawless prank, earning alternately high praise and the guard-house.

And when the business was finished, when both had been mustered out of the service, and Spread Eagle Battery was only a proud memory, they drifted apart as they had drifted together.

Pericles did not have even a farewell pat on the neck from his old driver, for Mr. Slattery Littlefield, suddenly released from discipline, with eighteen months'

JUST HORSES

back pay in his pockets, was careening riotously about the national Capital, gorgeously but irregularly arrayed in the full-dress uniform of a cavalry Captain, to the distinct annoyance of the provost's guard.

As for Pericles, he netted the War Department some thirty-seven dollars, and was returned to civil life as nigh horse on a dirt wagon, beginning his humble share in the work of reconstruction by helping to excavate a cellar for a dry goods store in a great metropolis.

However, one cannot spend four years in the artillery, especially in such a battery as the Spread Eagle, without being more or less unfitted for the commonplaces of civilian life. Pericles found it so; likewise Slat. Littlefield.

Thus it happened that one day in the early seventies there limped out before a

THE STORY OF PERICLES

crowd of auction buyers the sorry wreck of a sixteen-hand gray horse. He was knee-sprung and saddle-galled. You could have dropped an egg into the hollows over his eyes. On his left shoulder was an old army brand.

“Here you are, gents!” called the auctioneer. “A four-legged hero of the late unpleasantness. He’s a little the worse for wear, but he’s still in the ring and hasn’t asked for a pension. Who wants a vet? How much for a horse that helped put down the rebellion?”

There was a laugh, but no bid.

“What, not a patriot here? Can’t any of you gents use an ex-war horse? Will you let a hero of Gettysburg go to the glue factory?”

“Ten dollars!” shouted some one.

“Sold!” promptly declared the auctioneer. “Ah, and to an old comrade!”

JUST HORSES

he added as a man with a faded-blue cape-coat over his arm came forward.

“Holy cats, it’s old Pericles!” exclaimed the bidder.

Perhaps Pericles did not remember his old driver—we know that he did, of course, but there are some folks who sniff at such things—but at any rate Slat. Littlefield knew him, and did not regret the impulse which had prompted the bid, although just at that moment Slat. had as much use for a horse as an Eskimo has for a palm-leaf fan.

Chance, which had sent him here and there about the country, had led Mr. Littlefield to that horse auction. The jibes of the auctioneer had done the rest. Although his entire capital was a ten-dollar bill and a small wad of scrip, he promptly paid the price, bought a second-hand bridle, mounted his purchase, and rode away.

THE STORY OF PERICLES

just as if that was what he had intended all along. Not until they were clear of the city did he dismount and take stock of the future. Seating himself on a rock, he eyed the old gray critically.

“Well, Pericles, old boy,” he said, “I guess we’re about a pair. Used you rough, ain’t they? Worked you some harder’n I did on the gun, eh? And they was goin’ to send you to the glue factory! Not much, Pericles! You’ve been too good a horse for that. You deserve better of your country. You ought to have a home somewhere, a good home; and by thunder, Slat. Littlefield will find you one before he quits!

“But you need a rest, first, and some fat on those old ribs. Suppose we take a little jaunt together, you ’n’ me, something like what we used to take when we were promenadin’ up and down the Po-

JUST HORSES

tomac, only more casual. Seeing it's spring, we'll work north and have a look at the country."

It was not a definite program, but it suited Pericles, and Littlefield seemed to enjoy it.

"Bless me, if it don't seem good to throw a leg over a horse once more!" he frequently remarked.

So up through New York State and on into New England this picturesque pair advanced, the gray old horse and the long-legged rider who used a blue army overcoat as a saddle-blanket. How Pericles did enjoy it! When one has been bred for the drudgery of city hauling and has known nothing else, it is not so bad. But when one has galloped to bugle music, has stabled under the stars and between the guns, and when one has known such a driver as Slat. Littlefield,

THE STORY OF PERICLES

a dirt wagon becomes an abomination.

What a careless, happy-go-lucky trip they made of it, stopping when there was anything to pause for, moving on when they pleased and at their own gait! Occasionally, under the inspiration of one of Slat.'s old-time yells, Pericles shook out his stiffness, threw up his head, and galloped at something like his old pace.

Early in their wanderings Littlefield felt the need of a reasonable and logical explanation of his errand. Groups of loungers about the village stores were apt to be curious. They seemed better satisfied if one told them a good yarn. So there was evolved a bit of fiction intended to please.

At first Pericles was merely "my old Lieutenant's horse, that I'm takin' up into Maine to be turned out to pasture." Then it was a Captain who was sending his

JUST HORSES

mount back to his old home. Next the Captain became a Major. But at last, determined to do the thing handsomely while he was about it, Littlefield hit upon the audacious fabrication to which he stuck, except for little niceties of elaboration, until he almost believed it himself. It ran something like this:

“ Army horse? Yes, pardner, you’re right. There’s Uncle Sam’s mark on his shoulder, plain enough. Cavalry? Well, I should say so! Best cavalry horse in the Union army, he was; though you wouldn’t think it to look at him now, would you?

“ Ever hear of Pericles? Well, ask any man that ever rode with Sherman who Pericles was. Yes, that’s him, Sherman’s horse, the one that carried him all the way from Atlanta to the sea. Thinks a heap of him, the General does, more’n he ever thought of me, and I was body-guard to

THE STORY OF PERICLES

him for over a year. Pericles saved the old man's neck a dozen times, I guess. That's why he's sendin' him by me, instead of lettin' him be banged around in stock-cars. Where? Oh, down Bangor way. Cousin of the General's going to take him and keep him in clover the rest of his days. Battles? He's been in more of 'em than he's got hairs in his tail. See that old scar on his neck? Saber cut, down on the Rapidan. Shouldn't wonder but he's got half a pound or so of rebel lead in him now. Yes, Pericles was a first-class horse. Sherman thinks so, anyway."

Just how many thousands were treated to a sight of "General Sherman's war horse" during that summer would be a subject of vain speculation. Usually the story would spread over an entire village in from ten to fifteen minutes, and Littlefield would be called upon to repeat the

JUST HORSES

details to each fresh lot of curious arrivals. The results indicated that sentiment was not dead, that patriotism still burned. Pericles found himself quartered comfortably, fed generously and made much of. Nor did Littlefield lack entertainment.

Yet, somehow, or other, Pericles would not enter into the spirit of the thing. Whenever he found himself the center of an open-mouthed, staring-eyed group of men and boys, and Littlefield began the familiar tale, Pericles would drop his head sheepishly and appear as much unlike a cavalry charger as possible. Almost one might have thought that he understood and was ashamed of being a party to such deception.

Well, along in August something happened which caused an abrupt change in Littlefield's plans. It was a chance meet-

THE STORY OF PERICLES

ing with an old tent-mate who was bound for some new gold fields that he vaguely described as being "out in the Indian lands."

"Better go along, Slat.," urged he. "They're making rich strikes every day. Oh, I'll stake you to tickets if you'll go."

Slat. glanced at Pericles and hesitated.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said. "You wait for me two days in Boston and I'll go. How's that?" This suited.

"And now, Pericles," confided Littlefield when they were once more alone on the road, "we've got to find a home for you, even if I have to swear you're one of Pharaoh's original team."

But the Sherman story, remodeled to suit the urgent need of the occasion, proved to be all sufficient. When Miss Arabella Pinkham heard it, heard how General Sherman's old war-horse was

JUST HORSES

doomed to wear out his noble soul as a brick-yard drudge, she wept on Pericles' battle-scarred neck.

She was a spinster, was Miss Pinkham. Some called her eccentric. But she was sole heiress of the Pinkham estate, and she had a way of doing about as she pleased. Patriotism was her besetting virtue. Her ancestors had fought at Lexington, and she never permitted herself to forget it. She herself had joined the Abolition movement early in the fifties. Besides, of all the Union heroes, Sherman had been her idol.

“Oh, it would be a shameful thing!” she protested.

“It's too blamed bad, I know,” confessed Littlefield; “but I can't just help it. I can't afford to feed him any longer. I wrote to the General about having the old horse he used to ride; but I guess he's

THE STORY OF PERICLES

been too busy to answer, or else he never got the letter at all. Anyway, when that brick-yard man offered me fifty dollars for Pericles if I'd fetch him up there I just had to say I'd take it. But it's like partin' from a brother to let him go. Now, if I could only find some one that appreciated him for what he is and would give him a good home I—I'd sell him for—well, forty dollars. Yes, I would, by gum!"

"Oh, would you?" demanded Arabella.

"Well, I would for forty-five, anyway."

He did, throwing in a most elaborate and vivid description—wholly new and original—of valorous deeds in which Pericles had assisted. Then, with the money in his pocket, he hastened back to Boston. Presumably he went after gold, for of Slat. Littlefield, who drove the lead horses

JUST HORSES

of Spread Eagle Battery, there is no further record.

As to Pericles—well, he had known hard work and rough usage for many years. He was ready for something different. True, the devotion of Arabella Ann Pinkham frequently translated itself in odd and unexpected ways. It is doubtful, for instance, if Pericles appreciated the cabbage-rose wall-paper with which his stall was decorated, or the rag-carpet rug under his forefeet. Possibly there were lost on him the beauties of the framed chromo of General Sherman, the mirror above his feed-box and the dimity curtains at the side window.

But the freedom of the big pasture in summer, the heavy, quilted blankets in winter and a diet of unheard-of dainties—such as hot mince pie and molasses cookies and custard pudding—were all most ac-

THE STORY OF PERICLES

ceptable. The petted buffs in the royal mews of Buckingham never grew fatter or lazier, never lumbered along with more cumbrous dignity than did Pericles in his last days. And when at the ripe age of almost twenty he ceased to be, he was laid at rest near the big lilac bush in the front yard.

The monument was no afterthought. It was all prepared, except for the cutting of the date, two years before the sad event. And there it stands now, a three-ton block of New Hampshire granite. On its one polished surface you may read this:

In Memory of
PERICLES

The gallant steed who carried General
W. T. Sherman on his famous march
from Atlanta to the sea.
Erected by his last owner and loving
mistress, Arabella Ann Pinkham,
Sept. 21, 1875

JUST HORSES

To be sure, Pericles never did anything of the kind. Yet what of that? Did any fancy charger better serve the country than the nigh lead on Spread Eagle Battery's Number One gun? If his last years were made smooth for him, did he not merit as much? As for the monument, you have seen how it was, in a sense, thrust upon him. Besides, who believes all that folks write on monuments, anyway?

FIDDLER

FIDDLER

HAVING been the owner of Fiddler for almost two weeks, Mr. Hiram Proggins arrived somewhat abruptly at the conclusion that he had made a mistake. Either Fiddler was not the horse for him or he was not the man for Fiddler. From his perch on the grain-box Mr. Proggins stared in dissatisfied contemplation at the stall where Fiddler's white nose was submerged in the manger. Yes, a mistake had been made.

Fiddler had known it all along. There were horses, plenty of them, that would have suited Hi Proggins. Some horses, you know, don't care a clover-head who own them. Fiddler was not of this kind.

JUST HORSES

He could make distinctions, and very fine ones, sometimes. The mere sight of Proggins aroused his suspicions, and when Fiddler first felt the touch of the new owner's hands on the reins he was assured by that subtle instinct common to every good horse, that he and Mr. Proggins were not in accord and never could be.

In the first place, Proggins was glum and unsociable. Fiddler's chief traits were cheerfulness and sociability. Also, he had that which many scientific folks will tell you no animal possesses—a sense of humor. Judging him by a full-face view, you would never guess it. Fiddler had a long head—an abnormally long head—which gave to his frontal expression a solemn, almost lugubrious cast. Perhaps no horse ever carried about such a doleful face. It was grotesquely woebegone.

But view him from either side, get the

FIDDLER

effect of his parrot nose, note the sly humor of his drooping eyelids, the merry drollery lurking in the mouth corners, the mischievous twitching of his pendant upper lip, and you would find yourself grinning out of sheer sympathy with his jovial mood.

Mr. Proggins, however, did not grin. He never grinned. The face of Proggins was not fashioned for such purpose. Mainly it was whiskered—not with a long, benevolent beard, nor with an aristocratic Vandyke. It bristled with a coarse, scraggy, untractable, sandy-hued growth that suggested irritability of temper. As for the eyes of Proggins, no one might know what they expressed, for they were deeply set under bushy brows and further hidden by an overgrown pair of smoked glasses. Those glasses puzzled Fiddler, as well they might, for they gave to the

JUST HORSES

unattractive face of Proggins a weird, sinister expression.

This was unfortunate. Proggins was not a bad fellow. He was simply an unsuccessful inventor whose disposition had been somewhat soured. Chiefly this was due to misdirected effort, for Proggins had inventive genius of no mean order. But he misused it. Was there anything along impossible or impractical lines, Proggins thought of it and straightway set himself the task of inventing it. He invented a mattress that would turn itself over once in ten days, provided that you wound up the weights and set the clock-work properly. The fact that the great American public did not yearn for a self-turning mattress embittered the mind of Proggins. A lawn-mower that could be converted into a feed-cutter, a hand-cultivator, a churn, or a coffee-grinder was an-

FIDDLER

other ingenious boon that the public declined to appreciate.

The two or three inventions which had proved of real value brought him meagre returns because manufacturers' agents had juggled the patent rights to that end. But always and endlessly, despite failure and reverses, were Proggins's best thoughts, most of his income, and the greater part of his time devoted to the construction of a perpetual-motion machine, which seemed doomed to be perpetually motionless.

It was this unoriginal folly that had estranged kin and friends, that had caused Proggins to leave town and seek the seclusion of a ten-acre farm off the County House Road. There, in unpainted, ramshackle buildings huddled among unpruned trees and surrounded by untilled fields, Proggins lived like a

JUST HORSES

hermit, working at vain things, dreaming vain dreams, and cherishing resentment against a careless world.

About once a week Proggins reluctantly tramped into the nearest town for supplies and material. With the purpose of making these trips still more infrequent, he decided to buy a horse. Unluckily for both, Fiddler chanced to be the animal which fate and an unsympathetic horse-dealer picked out to share his lot.

When you have pulled a post-cart over a suburban mail route for some five years you come to know a lot of folks and a lot of folks come to know you. When you are watched for every day by several hundred persons, when you establish intimate relations with a whole neighborhood, then your work ceases to be mere drudgery. Fiddler had found it so. He liked to see them, the women and children, and some-

FIDDLER

times the men, standing at the gate watching for him. They seemed glad to have him stop, even though he left nothing more than the weekly paper or a patent-medicine almanac. They brought him things to eat,—bunches of clover whose honey-laden tops were deliciously sweet, red summer apples, and on baking-days fresh crullers and ginger cookies. He liked his driver, too—a jolly chap who whistled and sang as Fiddler jogged along the highway.

Changes, however, are bound to come. The driver was promoted to the railway division, and the new postman had a horse of his own. So Fiddler went to the horse-trader, and from there to the Proggins farm. Sadly did Fiddler miss his friends on the mail route. Here was only this glum-visaged man with bristling whiskers and queer-looking eyes. He neither

JUST HORSES

looked nor acted friendly. But Fiddler was bound to make the best of things. In a dozen ways he tried to be sociable. He had a trick of upsetting the grain-measure by an unexpected lift of his long nose when he was being fed. The postman had enjoyed it heartily, and every meal-time they made quite a game of it. But Proggins rapped him sharply with a stick he carried, and refused to enter into the spirit of the joke. He wanted none of Fiddler's good-natured nosings and plainly showed it.

It was clear, too, that he was afraid of the horse, approaching head or heels with much caution. Fiddler, who had never kicked or used his teeth on any one in all his life, came to enjoy lifting a threatening hoof or laying back his ears, just for the fun of seeing Mr. Proggins dance out of his way.

FIDDLER

What was the matter with the man, anyway? Fiddler could not make out. Then there remained the mystery of those smoked glasses. So Fiddler got into the habit of watching his master closely as long as he could keep Proggins within range of his eyes. His were big, round eyes, too, deep and full and strikingly human in their expression. Fiddler could stare out of them in such a questioning way that one was almost moved to ask, "Well, old fellow, what's up; what do you want to say?"

Hi Proggins was not so moved. To him this stare of Fiddler's was intensely disconcerting. Whenever he was at work about the barn he might be certain that those big, round eyes were following him. Fiddler would even crane his neck to watch Proggins shake out the bedding or when he was fastening the traces behind

JUST HORSES

him. This Mr. Proggins interpreted as an evidence that the horse was only waiting for a chance to play him some evil prank. Naturally he grew to dislike Fiddler as well as to fear him.

Once he had Fiddler safely harnessed and had climbed up on the wagon out of range of his blindered eyes, Mr. Proggins's mind was at peace. Sitting humped over on the seat, his thoughts dwelling on some new obstacle presented by the intricate contrivance in his workshop, Proggins would allow Fiddler to jog along wholly unguided for half an hour at a time.

Then it was that Fiddler tasted happiness. Hungry for the sight of horses and men, he improved each trip to town by giving full play to his sociable impulses. He whinnied friendly greetings to every passing team, and often left the road altogether just to rub noses with a pastured

FIDDLER

horse. Could he overtake a carriage, he would follow it doggedly, if possible with nose on the seat-back. In this way he frightened several old ladies, who roused the absent-minded Proggins from his day-dreams to scold him soundly for his impertinence.

Arrived in town, it was Fiddler's delight to stop before the court-house or town hall or wherever was the biggest crowd, much to the disgust of Proggins, who wished to come in contact with as few persons as possible.

But Fiddler was bent on being sociable when opportunity offered. Twice he forced his way into funeral processions, where he was not at all wanted. Was there a crowd about a travelling fakir's wagon in the market square, Fiddler, if not closely watched, would push into the thickest of it. On one occasion he fol-

JUST HORSES

lowed a stream of carriages into the fairgrounds, and Proggins was brought to his senses by an indignant ticket-collector who charged him with being a beat.

It was always Proggins who was blamed for intrusiveness. No one ever seemed to suspect Fiddler. Even Proggins himself, unwilling to credit the horse with anything more than brute instincts, was not suspicious. He was puzzled, however, when one Sunday, after starting for town under the impression that it was Saturday, he woke from a brown study to find himself in the carriage shed of the Calvary Baptist Church just as the morning service was concluding. Proggins, who particularly disapproved of churches and church-going, had the humiliation of being compelled to drive home in the midst of the Sunday procession. Some say Fiddler wore a broad grin, but prob-

FIDDLER

ably it was nothing more than his normal expression.

From that day, however, Fiddler was no longer trusted to find his way into town and back. At cost of much mental effort Proggins did the guiding and avoided places where he had no wish to go. Fiddler had to submit, although he eyed longingly every group and gathering.

As Proggins's dislike for the horse deepened, he began to dread the three visits which he must make every day to Fiddler's stall with feed and water. The persistence with which he was followed about by the searching stare of inquiry disturbed and upset his mind. But Proggins was not an inventor for nothing. Resolutely suspending his tinkering on the perpetual-motion machine, for nearly a week he measured and hammered and worked about the barn. Fiddler watched

JUST HORSES

and wondered, but he could make nothing of it.

Then one morning Proggins did not come to the barn at all. Yet the water-bucket in the manger was mysteriously filled, the usual two quarts of grain miraculously appeared without a sign of hands, and a big forkful of hay was noiselessly pitched down from the loft. At noon and again at night the phenomenon was repeated, and without sight or sound of Proggins. Fiddler stared and listened, but solve the puzzle he could not.

Still, considering the genius of Proggins, the thing was no great marvel. He had simply built a series of troughs from the pump to the water-bucket, hoisted the grain-box into the loft, and dropped a chute with a string-regulated slide into the manger, and contrived an automatic hay-fork. This last, it must be admitted,

FIDDLER

was really a clever device. The whole arrangement worked perfectly.

The result was that Fiddler's isolation was complete. The lonely monotony of stall-standing was now unbroken even by the brief visits of the unsociable Proggins. It was the most absolute solitude which Fiddler had ever experienced. The farm was a lonesome place at best, and the silence that hung about it like a pall was almost unbroken. In barnyard or pasture were no lowing cows, not a hen cackled cheerfully; there was not even a dog or cat about the place. The only sound to be heard was the muffled hammering of Proggins in his distant workshop.

And Fiddler didn't like it. He soon became tired of being fed and watered by machinery. He wanted to see some one, even if it were only Proggins. So he re-

JUST HORSES

volted. He backed against the barn door until the rusty latch gave way. Then he walked out into the barn-yard and began to hunt for company.

Thus it was that Proggins, conscious of some unusual presence, looked up from his work to see the solemn face of Fiddler framed in the open window and those big, curious eyes fixed upon him with disconcerting stare.

“Get out of here, you beast!” Proggins fairly shrieked. “Get out, you long-faced son of Satan!” and he waved a hammer threateningly. Arming himself with a long pole, he undertook to drive Fiddler back into the stable. But the horse was enjoying his liberty too well to go tamely back into the hateful stall. A merry chase they had of it, through the neglected orchard, about the weed-grown garden, into the road, and back again.

FIDDLER

Then Proggins had an inspiration. He would drive Fiddler down to the highway and lose him. That would end the business, would rid him of this troublesome animal. As for Fiddler, he seemed glad enough to go, and Proggins saw him disappear over a hill with a sense of thankfulness. Two hours later, however, a boy from a neighboring farm led Fiddler back in triumph and demanded a dollar. Proggins grumbled, but paid the reward and put a new latch on the barn door.

This was the beginning of a game which progressed from day to day. Fiddler's part was to find the weak spots in the old barn and to go through them. Proggins undertook to repair the breaks and to thwart new attempts. It was a spirited contest.

At first Proggins tried to gain an ad-

JUST HORSES

vantage by putting a halter on Fiddler and tying him to a stout stanchion. Fiddler promptly gnawed through the halter rope and declined to allow a repetition of the handicap. His outbreaks were bold and ingenious. Once he forced the door of the cow-shed. Another time he backed through the side of the barn, ripping off two loosened boards. And after each escape he went straight to the window of the workshop, as if to taunt the defeated Proggins and challenge him to another prance through the orchard.

Having endured this sort of thing for several days, Proggins became desperate. He had reached what he believed to be a critical stage in his life-work. At any moment he expected to see the various wheels of his machine start into endless motion, and he was working with feverish enthusiasm. But apply himself he could

FIDDLER

not with that long, white, solemn face leering at intervals through his window and that disturbing stare following his every movement.

“ You’ve done it again, have you? ” he growled, as Fiddler made his last appearance. “ Want to drive me crazy, don’t you, you four-legged old Slippery Jack? But I’ll fix you, I’ll fix you this time.” Here Mr. Proggins shook a futile fist, while every wiry hair of his sandy whiskers bristled with anger. “ I’ll fasten you up now, you blamed old white hoodoo, so you can’t get out. I’ll do it if I have to build the whole darned barn over with walls a foot thick.”

With this threat Mr. Proggins impetuously grabbed his hat and started on foot for the nearest sawmill to order a load of lumber.

Reproachfully Fiddler watched the

JUST HORSES

bent form of Proggins dash down towards the County House Road. Then he stuck his long head into the open door of the workshop and sniffed curiously about. Next to the window was a carpenter's bench littered with tools and shavings and odd pieces of machinery. On the other side of the door was a hand-forge, a coffee-pot, and a frying-pan resting on the gray coals.

The rest of the room was largely occupied by a huge, flimsy-looking affair that suggested the combination of a grandfather's clock with a threshing-machine. It had wheels and weights and arms and levers and ropes and springs and pulleys. Such a contraption Fiddler had never seen before, and it attracted him. Cautiously he approached the thing, stepping carefully over the creaking floor boards, his neck stretched out, ears pricked for-

FIDDLER

ward, nostrils expanding and contracting, and pendant upper lip working tentatively.

All might have ended well and no mischief done had not Fiddler planted one of his hind feet on a saw. The thin steel snapped with a sharp report. Fiddler snorted in alarm and jerked upwards his long nose, striking a projecting lever. There ensued a whirring of wheels, a creaking of pulleys, a confused buzz of cogs. The thing was alive, then? It was some monstrous insect!

Fiddler reared in fright. His head struck the ceiling, and down he came with a grand crash. The machine toppled towards him, and the next that he knew he was hopelessly mixed up in the thing. So he went plunging madly about, his legs twined and tangled with ropes and springs, his iron-shod hoofs smash-

JUST HORSES

ing and bending parts at every jump.

This is how it really happened. Mr. Proggins's theory that Fiddler deliberately attacked the machine with malicious intent is wholly absurd. Yet he thoroughly believed it at the time. Perhaps he does still. It is true that when he returned at the end of half an hour, having determined to make Fiddler haul the lumber for his own undoing, he found the old white horse dancing frantically on the ruin of the wrecked machine.

"I've had a mighty lot of hard luck in my day," said Proggins, "but I guess that was about the hardest knock I ever got. I was more scared than mad, though I'm not superstitious; but if ever a horse was possessed of the devil it was that old Fiddler. I don't want to see anything like it again. Heard folks tell about their blood running cold, haven't you? Well,

FIDDLER

mine did when I saw the antics of that four-legged demon. And that grin of his! His jaws were shut tight, but his lips were drawn up until you could see his teeth way back to his ears.

“But his eyes were the worst. They just blazed with deviltry. He had that coffin-shaped head of his up in the air, and he was switching his old white tail and rampaging about that shop as though he meant to make match-wood of the whole business—which he come pretty near doing.

“I couldn’t swear and I couldn’t cry, though I wanted to do both at once. I just stood there with my eyes sticking out and my hair standing up until, all of a sudden, he looks up and sees me. Then he charged through the door at me like a setter going after a rabbit. I yelled and made a dive for the old smoke-house. As

JUST HORSES

I jumped in I slammed the door after me and climbed up on the top beams.

“Guess I must have roosted there nearly three hours before I dared to come down. I heard Fiddler stamping in his stall as he used to when he wanted his feed. I tiptoed out until I could get hold of the grain-box string, and I pulled that two or three times. The grain quieted him, and while he was eating I slipped around and shut the barn door, bracing it with half a dozen fence rails. Then I walked over and took the night train to the city, where I hunted up a man who makes a business of training vicious horses. I paid him twenty-five dollars to come out and take Fiddler away. And what do you think? That contrary old beast whinnied as if he was glad to see us, and followed the man off as meekly as a mooley cow. Blast his old white hide!”

FIDDLER

Curiously enough, the smashing of the perpetual-motion machine proved to be the making of Proggins. Quite too discouraged to begin a new one, he abandoned the whole scheme and out of sheer irony applied his genius to the fashioning of a patent stopper for tomato-ketchup bottles. In less than six months he had more money than he knew what to do with.

Nor did Fiddler pass into oblivion. Far from it. Some time or other you will probably arrive at one of the great railroad terminals in Jersey City. Should you chance to hit upon the right one, you may see, moving with leisurely steps and solemn dignity through the inbound and outgoing throngs, an old white horse with an abnormally long head.

It will be Fiddler. His business is to haul baggage-vans back and forth along the platforms. Surely, you will say, he

JUST HORSES

cannot lack for society. Nor does he. Every hour of the day folks are shunted in from the far corners of the world to meet him. Men from all lands brush his flanks and carry away on their coat sleeves white hairs from his sleek quarters.

And Fiddler appears to enjoy it all immensely. On his solemn old white face sits contentment. In the midst of trainshed riot he is thoroughly at home. You may see him stand serene and tranquil as a big six-driver camel-back dragging the Chicago Limited slows down with a screech of brake-shoes from its mile-a-minute run and comes to a hard-breathing stop not ten inches from his nose.

“Hello, old Whitey!” the engineer will sing out, leaning from his cab to smooth Fiddler’s ears. “We’re back again, you see.”

FIDDLER

Perhaps no mere traveller was ever more surprised at meeting Fiddler on the station platform than the occupant of a Pullman section who alighted one day from the Washington express. The colored porter who followed him with his hand-baggage seemed to think him a personage, but you or I would have needed but one glance at those smoked glasses and sandy whiskers before exclaiming, "Proggins!"

The first sight of Fiddler made him gasp; and no wonder, for as he stepped from the train he found himself confronted with that unforgettable white face. Under his whiskers Proggins turned pale, and had it not been for perilous the deep respect which his dollar tip had evoked from the porter he would have climbed back into the car and shut the door. Edging around Fiddler and well

JUST HORSES

to the rear, Proggins addressed the man in charge of the baggage-van.

“ Nice horse you have there, eh? ”

“ Yes, sir; he’s all right, old Fiddler is. And knowin’— Say, he knows more’n lots of people, he does.”

“ Yes,” assented Proggins, “ I should judge so.”

As he moved down the platform toward the ferry-boat, Mr. Hiram Proggins turned to take a last look at the old horse. Fiddler, too, had swung about and presented his profile. It wore a sardonic grin. And Proggins, who had learned how, grinned responsively.

THE STRAYING OF
LUCIFER

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

IT was not that Lucifer meant to intrude. A better-mannered horse you never knew. But when one has been tied in the woods for many hours one comes to want water very much indeed, and then, if one breaks a halter and goes seeking a drink, quite naturally he is liable to overlook some of the little niceties of behavior.

Lucifer did. There happened to be a door between him and the water which he could sniff so plainly. The door was latched, too, but this troubled him only for a moment. He was trying it with his nose, finding out how the thing worked, when someone inside called sharply:

JUST HORSES

“Come in, come in!” Just then Lucifer hit upon the combination, lifted the little iron finger-piece, pushed with his head and answered the invitation by squeezing himself through the narrow doorway.

Possibly the sharp-faced, angular old woman who sat at the window shelling peas was unprepared for such a visitor. Yet she needn't have screamed so. Lucifer didn't bite or kick, save under extreme provocation, and his bearing was most friendly. She ought to have known that by the way he held his ears. But she waved her apron at him and shrieked piercingly.

Lucifer, however, was thirsty, and there on the bench was the water-bucket. Merely glancing at the old woman, he walked over and plunged his muzzle into the clear, cool well water. Didn't it taste good, though!

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

Not until he had touched bottom did he look up. A girl had come in; a tall, slim girl, who wore a checked apron and a long braid of brick-red hair that hung down her back. She was talking soothingly to the old woman.

“He won’t hurt you, Aunt ’Phemie. He was thirsty, that’s all. But, oh, isn’t he a beauty! Isn’t he, Auntie?”

Now this was sensible. Perhaps Lucifer did not catch the full meaning of the words, but he liked the tones of the girl’s voice. They were low, calm, pleasant tones with no fear in them. This much he understood very well.

And Lucifer was a beauty, to be sure. His coat was a pure, snowy, dazzling white with a kind of satiny sheen to it. From his plume-like forelock, that rippled half way down to his nose, to the end of the silky tail falling almost to his heels,

JUST HORSES

there was not spot or fleck of color. There were sixteen hundred pounds of him, too; not mere bulk, for most of it was supple, closely packed muscle under perfect control.

Of all these things Lucifer had knowledge, in his own way—one could see that by the way he carried himself: but it did not prevent him from appreciating the good points of others. Hence he eyed the girl approvingly and stood quite still, gazing about the room. In all his somewhat varied career he had never before been in a farm-house kitchen.

“Shoo, shoo!” exploded the old woman.

“Oh, Auntie, don’t! Let’s see what he’ll do. Does the nice horsey want a radish? Does ums?”

Now, as everyone knows, babies and all animals understand that sort of talk per-

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

fectly. Lucifer made his best bow to the red-haired girl and went through the motion of pawing with one foreleg.

“Did you see, Auntie? Did you see him beg? Well, ums shall have a radish, so ums shall!”

And in spite of the old woman’s protests the girl held out one of the red-and-white things to him. Stepping gingerly across the creaking floor boards, Lucifer picked it from her palm in his daintiest fashion. It tasted good, so he begged for more, and got them. Then he was fed a lot of peapods in a basin.

“Now, sir, we’ll have to go outdoors. Auntie’s afraid of you,” said the girl at last, fearlessly taking him by the forelock and leading the way. Meekly Lucifer followed, and the two tramped out into the back-yard, to the great relief of Aunt Euphemia Penny, who regarded

JUST HORSES

Lucifer's unheralded appearance before her as a thrilling and mysterious event. It was unusual.

"Where on earth did the beast come from, Jerry?" As if Mrs. Penny thought that Jerry—her real name was Geraldine, you know—could answer. Yet Jerry did think she knew.

"Aunt 'Phemie would scold me if I told her," reflected Jerry, "or perhaps send me to bed without supper, but I believe I just wished him here. Don't I always say:—

"Star light, star bright,
First star I've seen to-night,
I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish to-night?"

And haven't I always wished for a horse? But I never dreamed I'd get such a lovely one as you. Oh, you great, white darling!"

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

Then Miss Jerry would reach up on tip-toes and put her slim arms about Lucifer's big, sleek neck and lay her red hair and soft, freckled cheek against his white nose.

From the first Lucifer liked it, although never before had he made friends with any wearer of skirts. They were so apt to giggle or scream, and either proceeding is jarring to sensitive nerves. But this red-haired girl did nothing of the sort. She was quiet and gentle, but wholly unafraid. Best of all, she seemed to understand him thoroughly, and he had known but few men of whom as much could be said.

Had it not been for Miss Jerry, though, life on the Penny farm would have been dull, indeed. The old barn had no other occupants than himself, unless you counted the hens which cackled in the

JUST HORSES

mows or the swallows darting among the roof beams. In the fields back of the barn was not even a cow.

But Miss Jerry proved to be company enough. Never had Lucifer found anyone who had a keener appreciation for his talents. At first, to be sure, she did not know how to play her part, but little by little she learned. How cleverly, for instance, did she pick up the handkerchief trick after Lucifer had dropped a hint or two. She had led him into the barnyard and turned him loose. At once Lucifer began the three-legged trot.

“ Why, you beauty, you’re lame, aren’t you? ”

That was exactly what she should have said, of course. The next thing to do was to limp up to her and hold out the stiff foreleg. There, however, Jerry was at a loss how to proceed until he took one of

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

her sunbonnet-strings in his teeth and tugged at it.

“ Shall I bind up the poor leg? Is that it? ”

It was, although Lucifer could only look sorrowful. But, as you have seen, Miss Jerry was a peculiarly gifted young person. Off came the bonnet-string with a rip and around the foreleg it went. Having bowed his thanks Lucifer cantered around the barnyard to show how complete was the cure.

How she did laugh at that and clap her hands! From then on she seemed to understand the game perfectly, even to the giving of mock scoldings when he would pull the bandage off with his teeth and trot humbly back to her, the bonnet-string dangling from his mouth.

“ Isn't he wonderful, Auntie! ” Miss Jerry would exclaim. “ Where do you

JUST HORSES

suppose he ever learned so much?"

"It's all very fine," retorted Aunt 'Phemie, "but when he's eat up all that hay, where's more to come from? 'An' who's to pay for that bag of oats? Who does he belong to, an' why don't they come and git him, that's what I'd like to know?"

"I hope he doesn't belong to anybody but just me. I know he don't want to," declared Miss Jerry. "And as for buying his oats, I can do that by selling some of my chickens. I'd rather have him than anything else in the world."

Not until he had thrown her once or twice did Lucifer learn that Miss Jerry could not stay on his back unless he went very carefully. But it was only a matter of two or three weeks before she got the knack. Then what fun they did have tearing about the fields, Lucifer with his

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

head up, ears forward, nostrils wide; Miss Jerry clinging to his long mane and uttering wild little cries of delight. When he was quite sure of her he began teaching her how to take jumps; low ones first, over narrow ditches and broken fences, higher and longer ones later, until she was perfect in the art.

Those were the finest runs Lucifer had ever known, for, with no bits in his mouth to bother him, no tugging of his head this way or that, he was the real master of the sport. Early in the morning, sometimes before the sun got up, was the time when she came out to join him in these wild, free gallops. It was then, too, that he was keenest for a run. He did not know, of course, why it was that Miss Jerry would ride at no other time, or why she stole down before Aunt 'Phemie was awake, to don in the barn a pair of loose-

JUST HORSES

fitting overalls which she had walked five miles to buy for this purpose. Lucifer only knew that Miss Jerry was fast learning to be the best rider he had ever carried on his back, and that she was the most companionable human he had ever known.

So Lucifer was content, and the Summer waxed and waned joyously.

Miss Jerry, however, was not so easily satisfied. She, too, had known other things than the quiet humdrum of the Penny farm. The memories were rather vague, for they were of early childhood, but once she had lived among different scenes. There had been great tents and many horses and wagons. Her mama was with her then, a beautiful creature, all pink-and-white, whom she sometimes saw in a spangled dress with short fluffy skirts. And they were always going somewhere. She remembered waking in

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

the night and peering out through curtains to see the black trees go by, always the black trees, with the bright stars overhead and the noise of hoof-falls and creaking axles to lull her to sleep again.

She could recall glimpses into the big tents where many lights burned high in the air, where people shouted and whips cracked and horses pranced around a yellow ring. A big man with a prickly black moustache had held her in his arms and said: "See, little one, see mama on the pretty horse!" Whereupon she had looked, then put her hands over her eyes and cried; for there were, oh, so many, many people out there and the lights were so bright and the horses danced about so, and she was afraid that something would happen to her beautiful mama.

In the end, too, something did happen. At least, she went to sleep one night and

JUST HORSES

in the morning her mama was not with her, and the man with the prickly moustache cried as he kissed her and gave her to a strange woman, who took her to Aunt Euphemia, with whom she had been ever since.

This was all she knew about that other life, or was ever likely to learn, for Aunt 'Phemie would tell her nothing.

“The less you know about it the better,” she had once replied.

As she grew up into a tall, slender girl she developed one passion, and that was for horses. Hour after hour she would stand at the front gate watching for them to go by. Most of them were farm-horses, staid, sober-eyed plodders weary with hard work. These she pitied. Occasionally a trotter in a gig passed and she stared admiringly. But a saddle-horse roused her enthusiasm as did nothing else.

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

Some of the riders must have thought her crazy, the red-haired girl with the blue eyes, who laughed and clapped her hands as they cantered by.

Then the big white horse had come so mysteriously, to the delight of her very soul.

Perhaps you will understand now why it was that Miss Jerry got into her head the very queer notion which she put into practice one night late in September. For weeks she had planned it. On two evenings she had stolen downstairs after Aunt 'Phemie had gone to bed. But at the last moment her courage had failed her and she had crept back to her room. The third time she had shut her lips tightly and said to herself, "I will do it, I will."

Lucifer was just taking his second after-supper nap when she roused him by coming into the stable. Sleepily he

JUST HORSES

watched her as she stood in the patch of moonlight that fell through the open door. She had her red hair fastened atop her head under an old slouch hat and she was putting on the loose overalls. Then Lucifer understood that there were prospects of a gallop.

But this time, instead of taking him out into the fields, she led him quietly past the house and through the front gate, making him keep on the grass until they were in the road.

“Now, my beauty,” she whispered tensely in his ear, “we’ll go to town and show them how to ride; won’t we, eh?”

Go to town they did. Lucifer saw the lights in the distance and made for them willingly. He rejoiced to feel again the hard road under him, to hear his hoofs beat out the quick, blood-stirring k’lar-rup! k’larrup! k’larrup! of his running

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

song. He threw up his head, snorted gleefully and struck into a long, swinging lope that laid the stretches of highway behind him in fine style. On his back, riding as lightly as a cork on a wave-crest, Miss Jerry cooed tenderly to him, now and then guiding him to the right or left by a pat on his neck, as she had long since learned how to do.

It was great fun. They could watch the folks run to their windows and peer out into the moonlight to see who rode at such a pace. Nor was the speed checked when they reached the broad main street of the town, where the houses sat snugly behind their little squares of green, where there were street lights and carriages and boys and girls who laughed on the sidewalks. Many eyes stared after the big white horse and his boyish rider as they clattered recklessly on.

JUST HORSES

Sure enough, Miss Jerry was showing the town folks how to ride. There it might have ended and no harm done but for an incident on which she had not counted. How was she to know that they were to meet the town's brass band escorting home the fire department from a country muster? That is precisely what happened. Turning a corner, they ran almost full tilt into the head of the procession. Just at that moment, too, the rat-tat-rat, tat, tat! marching tap of the snare-drum was changed to a full-volumed blare as the brasses brayed out:

“ When-you-hear the bells go ding-ling-
ling,
Bow-down-low, and sweetly we will
sing.
And when-the-verse am through, the
chorus all join in;
There'll be a hot time in the old town to-
night,
Mah Ba-a-a-by! ”

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

Miss Jerry should have fainted, or gone into hysterics, at least. But she didn't. She simply cast one startled, frightened glance at the band, at the lines of scarlet-shirted firemen, at the crowded street beyond. Then she drew in her breath with a quick little gasp, shut her lips very tight, pressed her knees into Lucifer's quivering shoulders, twisted her left hand into the strands of his mane and struck him smartly on the neck with her right.

But Lucifer needed no guiding then. What, with a band playing "A Hot Time" almost under his nose! Not he. Why that was his tune, *his*—the one they always played him on with. Forgetting his rider, forgetting everything save that the swinging music was throbbing in his head and sending little thrills clear down to his rudimentary toes, Lucifer reared his great bulk until his fore-

JUST HORSES

hoofs topped the six-foot band-leader's bearskin by many inches, pivoted grandly about on bent haunches, came down with a stamp that made the sparks fly from the macadam, swayed his head once or twice until he got the time, and then, neck arched, head tossing, forelegs pawing, tail waving like a silken banner and every motion perfectly attuned to the throbbing metre of the quickstep, he pranced and curvetted up the street at the head of the column.

For a moment, when the firemen and spectators saw the slim figure perched on the back of the great white horse, with neither saddle-pommel nor bridle-rein to cling to, they held their breath and prepared to view disaster. One or two ran forward to catch the rider as Lucifer whirled himself about.

But there was no disaster. They saw

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

the set lips relax into a smile of pure delight, saw a slender hand snatch off the slouch hat and wave it, saw a mass of brick-red hair tumble over the blue-and-white checked blouse—and that was quite enough to make them stare and keep their mouths agape.

There were cheers and shoutings. Red fire was burned and Roman candles sputtered sparks about them, for the friends of the firemen had planned to do the thing in style. Miss Jerry heeded not, for she had wholly and utterly abandoned herself to the charm of motion and music, her lithe figure swaying in graceful unison with every movement of the big horse.

And what did Lucifer care for noise or fireworks? Frighten him! Evidently you didn't know Lucifer. No, there was but one person in all that crowd who had the least idea as to where this splendid

JUST HORSES

white horse might have appeared from. This individual was a short, stockily built, seedily dressed man who ran along the curb, apparently more excited than the shouting small boys who ran with him.

“It’s him! It’s him!” he cried at intervals. No one disputed the statement. Perhaps it was because no one heard. But when at last the band ceased and the big horse with its rider wheeled into a side street and slipped away from the crowd, the seedy man was close behind, following silently on a bicycle contributed unwillingly by an astonished youth. Even Miss Jerry was not aware of his presence as she slid off Lucifer’s back at the Penny front gate.

It had been a wild prank, to be sure. She supposed she ought to feel frightened and sorry. But, oh, it had been glorious! The tumult of it still raced in her

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

veins. She knew that she only hoped that sometime it might be done all over again. Meanwhile the seedy man was busy.

It was not long after this that a badly written, wonderfully spelled letter reached Professor T. Caleb Norton, Proprietor and Manager of The Colossal Equine Paragon Company. And when the Professor had puzzled it all out he was most extravagantly pleased.

“Ime Buckie Slater,” the epistle began. *“Ime the osslur you fired lass spring. It was me tuck loosifur cos i was mad but he got away an i loss trak of him til jess now. Now i kno ware loosifur is safe an sound. I doant want no reward if you doant want to jug me fer oss stealin. All i want is to be tuck bak with loosifur an cal it skware. Duz it go.*

BUCKIE SLATER.”

“Does it?” asked the Professor of the empty air. “I guess yes! Why, that rascally Buckie is the best hostler in the

JUST HORSES

bunch, and if he wa'n't, just to get hold of Lucifer once more I'd hire the Old Boy himself. Besides, there's a matter of a five thousand dollar reward that needn't trouble me any more. I'll go after them myself."

Forty-eight hours later there was a touching reunion between two men. One was a big, grizzly moustached personage who wore in his wide striped shirt-front a diamond cluster about the size of a door-knob. This was Professor T. Caleb Norton. The other was a chunky, seedy-looking individual the Professor called "Buckie." When there had been full confession and free forgiveness the Professor was in a hurry to get to other business.

"No good going out there to-night," protested Buckie. "You got to stay over, anyways. In the mornin' we'll slip out

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

before sunup an' I'll show you suthin' worth seein'."

Being more or less persistent Buckie carried the day. Also his programme was followed, even to hiding themselves in an old cow-shelter on a knoll commanding a good view of the untilled Penny acres. It was as much as Buckie could do, however, to prevent the Professor from spoiling everything as soon as he caught sight of Lucifer.

"Wait, Professor; just you wait and see her ride."

"Huh! Who couldn't ride," snorted the Professor, "with the best-trained horse in America under 'em?"

"That's all right, but wait, I says. See, she goes it bareback with not even a halter strap on his nose. Look at there! Talk about yer lady equestriennes! Ever see one sit a hoss like that afore? Now

JUST HORSES

they're off fer keeps. Ain't that a pace, though? Now watch 'em take that fence! Whoop-e-e-e! How's that fer hurdlin', eh, Professor?"

But the Professor's eyes were glued to the small end of a pair of field-glasses. Only the rising and falling of the door-knob cluster on his striped shirt-front betrayed his emotion. At length he demanded: "Say, Buckie, who in Sam Hill's the girl that can ride like that, and where'd she learn?" Buckie chuckled.

"Learn! She didn't have to learn. Remember Clara Du Courcey, that used to ride fer old John Robinson?"

It was very unexpected, extremely abrupt. Mr. Buckie Slater could not imagine what had happened when he found the big fingers of the Professor gripping him by the throat.

"What d'ye mean, you pie-faced little

THE STRAYING OF LUCIFER

runt?" the Professor was roaring at him.

"I—I—I—that's her girl," spluttered the unhappy Buckie.

"Not little Jerry! Is it? By thunder, I believe it must be! Bless her, she rides like it don't she?"

This happened some seasons ago, but The Colossal Equine Paragon Company, "bigger and better than ever," if you believe the four-sheet posters, is still on the road. It has a Wild West feature and a squad of "genuine Cossacks," but the star act, the one that is billed heaviest and about which the manager shouts himself red of face and hoarse of voice, is the performance given by Lucifer, "whom the management stands ready to back as the most wonderfully trained horse in the world," and "the beautiful Miss Geral-

JUST HORSES

dine Du Courcey, the only lady horse-trainer in America.”

“It was bred in the bone, bred in the bone,” whines Aunt Euphemia Penny, dolefully.

Professor T. Caleb Norton says practically the same thing, only in a different manner, as he points proudly to horse and rider. “Good blood in ’em both, sir. It’ll show, blood will, every time.”

DEACON:
AND HOW HE TOOK OUT THE
CHRISTMAS MAIL

DEACON: AND HOW HE TOOK OUT THE CHRISTMAS MAIL

MOST things Deacon took as they came, and with great calmness of spirit, for he was an even-tempered old horse, whose disposition a dozen years, filled with the usual allotment of equine adversity, had thoroughly seasoned. Yet now he was pawing and stamping as impatiently as any four-year-old. At intervals he would stretch his neck, thrust forward his old white nose, and indulge in a complaining whinny. There was reason for Deacon's restlessness. More than an hour ago he should have been on the move, but here he was still waiting in the post-

JUST HORSES

office shed, and never a sign or word from his driver. Deacon, you understand, pulled Uncle Sam's mail over Rural Free Delivery route No. 2, Havertown, P. O. He had pulled it for three years, and he was fairly well versed in the business. At any rate, he knew that it was past his starting time. Long before had the sway-back sorrel on route No. 1 taken the road. The pert little bay mare on No. 3 had followed a few minutes later. Yet here was Deacon, with the heaviest and longest route of them all, still standing idly in the shed.

No wonder Deacon was losing his temper. It was cold in the shed. The fag end of a New England December usually brings that condition. The wind, whistling through the roof cracks, sifted fine, powdery snow, swept from the glistening drifts outside, down on Deacon's back. To add to other discomforts, his blanket

DEACON

had slipped to one side, and he was stamping on it.

Something out of the ordinary must have happened, of course. But Deacon, although he knew many things, had no philosophy to console him. He was chilled through, his muscles were numbed, and he longed to get out and jog along over the snowy roads, jingling his sleigh bells and stopping now and then for a moment's rest.

Inside, in the Havertown Postoffice, were a number of men whose frame of mind was worse than Deacon's. One of them was the postmaster himself. In the first place, the simultaneous arrival of a three-foot snow fall and the bulk of the Christmas mail was bad enough. Next came the disabling of one of his best drivers, and the discovery that two substitute carriers were out of town. Well, the post-

JUST HORSES

master said things. Dan Sweeney, driver of No. 2 route, was disabled beyond doubt. There he was, sitting on a pile of mail sacks, his back against a steam radiator, his face white and drawn out of shape by twinges of rheumatism. He had dragged himself down to the office, but that was all he could do. Now, although he should have been sent back to bed, he was sorting the mail for his route. He was not doing it in the way he usually did—a glance, a flash of the hand and a reach for another letter. It was a much slower business, for now and then the pain would grip him tight and make him stop. Yet the sorting must be done, and very carefully, too, for a man almost wholly new to the work was to take it out.

“The Christmas mail, too!” groaned Dan. He had a conscience, Dan had, and his heart was in his work.

DEACON

It was sight of the great pile of packages which made Danny groan deepest. They were more to him than simply so much fourth-class matter, these string-tied boxes and bundles. They were invested with something besides the statute-guarded sanctity of the United States mail, for which Dan Sweeney had no light respect. He knew that each one of them carried not only merchandise, but a subtle freightage of the goodly holiday spirit, the joyful sentiment of Christmastide.

And to think, just because of this plaguey rheumatism of his, many of them might not be delivered until the holiday was over with, when they would come lagging along, as stale as firecrackers on the fifth of July! So Danny groaned. There was a red cardboard box, tied about with fishing line—that was something for the Skinner boy, out on Joel's road, from his

JUST HORSES

uncle in Nova Scotia. There was a big, store-wrapped parcel, bearing a New York postmark—dolls, probably, for the Allison twins from their wealthy aunt. Well, if the twins got their dolls before the day after Christmas they would be lucky, for on an R. F. D. route you cannot deliver by street numbers. One must know the folks. And the new man did not know them. “There!” said Danny at last, to the office clerk who was to attempt the task, “you stow the packages in just that order and do your best to find where they go. Old Deacon ’ll take you over the route all right if you give him his head. He knows it like a book.”

So the Christmas mail was finally started out over route No. 2. Deacon turned an inquiring eye on the new man, as much as if to ask what was the matter with Danny. But the office clerk, his per-

DEACON

plexed mind filled with the many things he had been told to remember, paid no heed to the old white horse between the shafts. Perhaps he should not be blamed. Deacon was not handsome. He was chiefly remarkable for the soberness of his long face, a characteristic which had earned him his name. Somewhat stiff in the fore-knees was Deacon, and his winter coat of long white hair was a bit shabby to look at. Yet for all this, any one who knew horses could have told by the full, wide-set eyes, by the square, honest muzzle, that Deacon was no ordinary "fool" horse. In fact, although wanting in beauty, and of uncertain pedigree, Deacon lacked neither sense nor bottom. During the years that he and Danny had carried the mail over that route he had learned every turn and corner, every mail box and stopping place on it.

JUST HORSES

No sooner had they reached Joel's road, where the route began, than Deacon realized the inexperience of the new man. Why, he was actually going to drive right past the Powers place, and the Powerses almost always had mail of some kind, even if it wasn't more than a poultry magazine or a seed catalogue. After one or two such mistakes Deacon took charge of things himself. From house to house he went, stopping wherever he had been in the habit of calling, waiting until the new carrier found who lived there and had looked through letters and parcels to see if he had anything for them.

It was a long and tedious method. The drifts, out on the open roads beyond the city's edge, were wide and deep, but through them Deacon plunged doggedly, behind him, lurching and careening like a ship at sea, the yellow-painted, glass-

DEACON

fronted box on runners, the box that was now so heavily laden with the material symbols of the Christmas spirit.

The fact that every one along the route knew Deacon as far as they could see him was a help. They were generally on the lookout for him, and on this day they were watching closely, you may be sure. No sooner did he come to a halt at a gate or a post than some one, perhaps half a dozen eager-eyed children, came running out to see what he had brought.

All the forenoon and all the afternoon this went on, but when the red sun went down in the frosty west there still remained half a hundred letters and more than a peck of packages to be delivered. The new man was hungry and tired, but he was no quitter. So he begged some hay and oats for Deacon, borrowed a lantern, and together they started to finish the

JUST HORSES

route. As for Deacon, his old knees were stiffer than ever, his big shoulder muscles ached, his flanks heaved like a pair of blacksmith's bellows, but he plunged on, never skipping a single house, never hesitating at a roundabout half mile, doing his whole duty quite as thoroughly as if there had been some one behind to urge him on instead of a cold-numbed clerk who no longer even touched the reins. At last only one letter was left, a thick, bulky one in a blue waterproof envelope, bearing a foreign postmark. "Josiah Braisted, Esq.," was the address.

"Braisted, eh?" muttered the clerk. "Wonder if the old horse knows where he lives?"

Evidently Deacon did, for he was plowing through a big drift, heading straight out on the Boston road into the darkness. Far ahead, on the top of a long hill, the

DEACON

clerk could see the lights of a big house. There were no other lights between. Miles behind he could make out the glow of the city. The clerk wished he could be back there, where one could be warm again and get something hot to eat. With numb fingers he pulled out his watch. Half-past nine! Why, it would take them a good two hours to drive back now! Braisted be hanged! He could get his letter after Christmas.

So he grabbed the reins and indicated to Deacon a desire to turn around. But Deacon would not turn. Pull on the rein as he might, Deacon would only swing his head about, keeping his legs moving straight ahead. By much shouting and sawing on the reins Deacon was stopped. Then the new driver waded out to his head, took him by the bits and tried to point the horse the other way. Deacon

JUST HORSES

refused to budge. Those lights on the top of the long hill marked the end of the route, and Deacon knew it. And to those lights they went. "Josiah Braisted?" asked the driver curtly of the young woman who answered his ring.

"Oh, it's come; it's come!" she shouted to some one within, as she held out her hand eagerly for the letter.

Never before had he seen so much excitement caused by the delivery of a letter. In a moment there were three or four persons in the front hall, all talking at once.

"Do you think it will save him, doctor?" asked the anxious faced old lady who had followed the girl to the door.

"It will if anything will, I guess," answered a stout, bearded man. And he mounted the stairs to see the patient in the upper room.

Then they insisted that the half-frozen



DEACON REFUSED TO BUDGE

DEACON

clerk come inside and have something to eat. Deacon? Oh, they would take care of Deacon. They did all this and more. It seemed that this letter had been long expected, and was sadly needed, for it came from a prodigal son to a very sick father. It had its effect, too.

Of course the clerk told them of Deacon's heroic stubbornness, of how the old horse had insisted on going to the very end of the route when he had tried to turn him back. Josiah Braisted, Esq., heard the story during his convalescence.

"I must tell my son about that when he comes home," he would repeat as they told him of the part Deacon played in the story. "We ought to do something for that old horse," he said.

They did, too. The office clerk, who will first show you a handsome gold watch, tells the story best, always ending with,

JUST HORSES

“ And old Deacon, why, he lives out there on the Braisted place like a thoroughbred. He’s in clover, he is.”

“ Well,” Dan Sweeney will add, “ it’s no more’n he deserves. Old Deacon was a mighty good horse in his day, and mighty knowin’.”

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 923 304 0

PS
3511
F756j

Un